# CBW

Number One
For PSV Professionals

**COACH AND BUS WEEK** April 19, 2006 **Issue 726** £2.50


1st with the news Now every Wednesday

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Making London a Low Emission Zone would cut down pollution from heavy goods vehicles, buses and coaches. How might this affect you? Visit **tfl.gov.uk/low-emission-zone** or call **08457 224 577** to get more information. Tell us what you think before the consultation ends on 24 April.

**MAYOR OF LONDON**

**Transport for London**

CBW

**COACH AND BUS WEEK**
is published by Rouncy Media,
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Full annual subscription rate for 51 issues:
UK £69, Europe/Eire £115, USA and rest of
the world £140

www.cbwnet.co.uk

ISSN: 1351-3877

Printed by: William Gibbons & Sons

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# The saga Wight didn't want

After the fury of operators at last week's Llandudno conference, there now seem to be glimmers of hope on the Isle of Wight.

It was as well that the second thread of this story - the comments made by Tory council leader Andy Sutton - hadn't broken when several furious operators asked the CTC to cancel its 'fam' trip to the island in protest at the unannounced doubling of coach parking charges.

There were rumours of a petition being set up among operators at the event; rumours would have changed to action had any of us known that Mr Sutton was already in print talking about 'getting rid of coaches' - apparently his interpretation of the island's agreed tourism strategy.

This new development, brought to our attention by the CPT, caused the ripples to take on tsunami-like proportions, with tourism attractions, hotel associations and operators venting their spleen through the local TV and radio stations. It does look as though the collective minds of the council are now focused on damage limitation and there are rumours this could lead to a rethink over coach parking policy.

Mr Sutton's underlying message is that the Isle of Wight needs a better spend from its tourists if it is to see real benefits from the summer influx. Couched in these terms, there are coach operators who not only agree with him but would happily share ideas to make this a reality.

I am certain of one thing; operators owe nothing to the Isle of Wight. For decades they have delivered tourists come rain or shine, at times when Mr Sutton's beloved 'independent travellers' cancel their ferry crossings. They have done so with little fuss, largely without bothering the council tourism services, at a tenth of the transport pollution and half the road wear of car tourism.

Last year, coaches made 22,000 ferry trips to the island, carrying 400,000 tourists who collectively will spend £4 million each day of their holiday, on top of their hotel bill. The council should be talking about the ways we can improve these figures.

Mark Williams

**Mark Williams**
Editor

*Coach and Bus Week* is a supporter of the following organisations:

COACH TOURISM COUNCIL
*Promoting Travel and Tourism by Coach*

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# It's council policy, says IoW man

## Bid to drive out 'low value' tourism is part of the plan

**Mark Williams, editor**

The managing director of an Isle of Wight attraction says that damaging remarks about coach tourism made by the council leader are actually part of council policy.

Simon Dabell, MD of the company which runs Blackgang Chine theme park, said that although Tory councillor Andy Sutton's remarks - reported in the island's 'county magazine' - may have been unguarded, the basic message is actually an interpretation of the council's tourism development plan.

"I think Mr Sutton may have fallen foul of the conversational tone of the article," he said. "But what he said is his interpretation of the tourism development plan adopted by the council.

"It includes evolution into a better class of product, with higher spending customers. We have seen a gradual decline in schools visits."

Conservative council leader Sutton comments that coach tourists "put absolutely nothing into the island's economy" and that: "We will never get rid of coaches, but we can shape the bucket and spade brigade..." provoked anger from Isle of Wight tourism businesses across the spectrum.

The comments were published after *CBW* exclusively revealed that operators had already pledged to boycott the island over doubled coach parking charges, levied without warning this spring.

Among those incensed by the price hike were Parrys International, Brecks, Silver Star of Wales, Radley Holidays of Brigg, and David Ogden Coaches.

But the revelation of the council's true agenda - widely seen as anti-coach by the group travel industry - sparked television and radio coverage, and both the CPT and CTC condemned the remarks.

"Without our off-season visits, the economy of the island would be in a much worse state - and let me remind everyone that coaches bring revenue and employment into the area without any complementary activities on the part of the Island's authorities," said Bob Pilbeam, coaching consultant for the CPT.

The CTC immediately cancelled a promotional visit to the island for its members, planned in mid-May, and its chief executive, Chris Wales, said: "We estimate that nearly 500,000 people visit the Isle of Wight each year by coach, based on recorded ferry crossings. To say that they do not spend any money is absolute rubbish. On a week-long holiday they will spend at least £50 each in local shops, tea rooms and pubs - probably more.

Isle of Wight council leader Andy Sutton said the Island could 'shape the bucket and spade brigade'

"So even at a conservative estimate they spend at least £25 million a year. In addition, operators invest millions a year in accommodation..."

Elfyn Thomas of Silver Star Coaches in North Wales said: "What's the point of us travelling all the way to the Isle of Wight when we are not welcome. It makes more sense for us to take our tours to a desination which we know values our business."

Shanklin hotelier James Blanchard said that, without coach groups, many small businesses like his could not survive: "Coaches are not full of people over 70, they come from all age groups, and are very pleasant guests.

"No, 75-year-olds don't spend all night drinking beer, but they write home to say what a lovely time they are having. For anyone to say they aren't valued is irresponsible, and it is extraordinary that it should be said by the leader of the council."

Blanchard said coach groups fulfil a valued role in providing year-round employment to hotel staff when few if any 'ITs' (independent travellers) visit.

This 'shoulder months' business helps underpin the annual wage bill and is, he said, part of the mix: "We don't have coach groups as a mainstay of the peak season, but if coaches stop coming we are all in trouble. My staff have mortgages and families."

The Shanklin Hoteliers Association is due to meet with Sutton this week to see if anything can be done to limit the damage done by his remarks. But the ripples rocked the ferry business.

"Wightlink recognises the coaching element to be an important and integral part of the overall tourism and travel market for the Isle of Wight," said sales director of Wightlink, Stuart Winn.

"The coach market covers the whole gamut of passenger profile, benefiting many hotels and accommodation suppliers as well as being vital to the many excellent island attractions, all of whom have invested heavily in their businesses."

Red Funnel ferries commercial director Colin Hetherington said: "We regret that the council should act unilaterally without consulting and understanding the potential implications with the travel trade, and we urge them to reconsider."

Dabell told *CBW* that the result of the furore may be positive. He said that the council is now looking again at coach parking, and may consider building bespoke coach parks, near hotels and attractions, with proper security. He believes operators don't mind paying for a proper parking service: "The charge is only worth it if it is for facilities that are correct and of good quality."

**What do you think?**

**Are you boycotting the Isle of Wight? Drop us a line at *cbwinbox@rouncymedia.co.uk*, fax 0845 280 2927 or vote in our poll on-line at *www.cbwnet.co.uk***

# Redundancy threat at Optare

Management at Optare, the Leeds-based bus manufacturer has refused to comment on news reports that job losses are being discussed with the workforce.

Despite repeated attempts to gain the company's side of the story, an official 'no comment' has come from Optare's public relations agency, and both the managing director Bob Coombes and newly installed chairman Russell Richardson have been unavailable to comment.

News reports late last week, suggested that union officials were stunned when the management announced redundancies, as the company is frequently hailed as one of Leeds' greatest manufacturing success stories. The UK's third largest manufacturer held 17% of the total bus and coach market last year with sales of 630 vehicles and turnover of £63 million. This year, managing director Bob Coombes, who was on holiday last week, said that a £70m turnover was on the cards (*CBW*, January 26). Optare's main site is at Cross Gates, Leeds, and it has a smaller plant at Hellaby, South Yorkshire, as well as a number of service centres around the country.

Steve Clark, full-time TGWU officer in Leeds said he did not know how many redundancies there are going to be: "It's going to be between Rotherham and Leeds, and our shop stewards are negotiating with the company to try and limit numbers.

"As part of the negotiations, the shop stewards have said they are prepared to go back to the members and some of the lads have said they are prepared to work a couple of hours less a week, if that will get them through a sticky patch. They are hoping to totally negate the redundancies this way.

"Optare have been telling us how great a success they have been. As far as I am aware, productivity is as good as it was. The redundancies have come as a bolt from the blue."

A 12-year-old Van Hool coach identical to the one involved in the accident

# File on schoolbus crash goes to DPP

Ireland's Health and Safety Authority (HSA) has sent a file to the Director of Public Prosecutions on its investigation into the Navan bus crash last year, in which five schoolgirls died.

The investigation focused on the unfinished road surface, the fact that ABS anti-lock brakes were not working on the Bus Éireann school bus, and the absence of a safety plan by Meath Co Council for the roadworks.

Charges of operating a defective vehicle have already been brought against Bus Éireann by Gardai, and further charges against the company or other bodies may result from the HSA investigation.

In the aftermath of the crash last May, speculation as to the cause centered on the unfinished state of the road between Navan and Kentstown, and about the layout of the roadworks, the temporary traffic lights and their sequencing.

Picture shows an identical Plaxton Panther with modified front entrance, but with wheelchair lift fitted

**Plaxton will show a DDA-ready version of its Panther at the UK Coach Rally in Brighton this weekend. Woottens of Chesham has ordered eight of the vehicles with a specially extended front overhang ready for fitting a wheelchair lift if required. Plaxton says the entrance is now the widest of any touring coach currently available in the UK. For our rally preview, see page 15.**

# 'No air' conclusion on French coach

VOSA gave a French coach a clean bill of health after six children were taken to hospital suffering breathing difficulties while on the vehicle.

The police sealed off the road in Surrey it was in and firefighters tried to discover the cause. But after examination, the children's problems were put down to 'lack of breathable air' and the coach from Normandy - travelling from Oxford to Beckingham, Kent - was allowed to complete its journey.

# Briefly

**Early indications show that the take up of the concessionary travel scheme has been way beyond expectations: one PTE is believed to have seen passenger numbers jump by 50%, and says it could run out of funds in the next eight months. There has been standing room only on some services, with paying passengers being unable to board, leading to concerns among operators about cash flow if the situation continues.**

**Rumours of a conflict between Iran and the USA are pushing oil prices ever higher. The price of London's Brent crude passed the $70 a barrel barrier for the first time last week, reaching $70.20, $1.31 higher than the previous record set when Hurricane Katrina hit the American coast last summer.**

**Bus Éireann is to test biodiesel on its fleet in the Cork area to combat rising fuel costs and emissions. The company will use a 5% blend of biodiesel, made from recovered vegetable oil. Last year Bus Éireann's spend on fuel rose to an all-time high of £8.3 million.**

**Tyneside MPs will keep fighting for funding to fill Nexus' CT funding shortfall. The group met with Tony Blair the day before the new national scheme was announced. The government was hoping that the new scheme would stop the protests over the current district-based scheme. Nexus was hoping Regional Development Agency One North East would contribute, but it refused last week.**

**National Express' newly rebuilt Heathrow Coach and Bus Station is fully operational, despite not being officially opened yet. Last minute snagging, and some improvements suggested by staff, will be completed before the opening, expected sometime in June.**

BUSES

# First Group in the dock... again

Nicola Shaw

First Group says information supplied by VOSA to the traffic commissioner - which landed its First Devon and Cornwall subsidiary at public inquiry last week - contained "material inaccuracies and was out of date" and that the inquiry should never have been called.

The public inquiry was called after two vehicle inspections by VOSA on July 21, 2005 and September 16, 2005 at the company's Barnstaple and Bude depots. VOSA's report allegedly said that First Devon and Cornwall had five 'S' marked prohibitions. But First says there was in fact only one 'S' mark, that concerned a problem with a ventilation system and was not safety related.

A statement from Nicola Shaw, managing director, First UK Bus, says: "We have made representations to the traffic commissioner... relating to this incorrect information and it is our belief that this public inquiry should not have been called."

First says VOSA now accepts that its report was incorrect, but traffic commissioner Philip Brown "nevertheless" still convened the inquiry. A spokesman for VOSA told *CBW* that the traffic commissioner wanted to consider the report, and the 20 prohibition notices the company had incurred since its last appearance at public inquiry on July 13, 2004.

Ms Shaw went on to say that since the inspections last summer the company has overhauled its maintenance procedures. She continued: "The result of these efforts has been that since November 2005 VOSA examiners have inspected 22% of our vehicles. Those inspections have resulted in a prohibition rate that is a third of the national average."

Mr Brown did not give his decision at the inquiry. A written decision is expected at the end of the month.

■ First says the replacement of First Devon and Cornwall managing director Gerald Taylor shortly before the public inquiry was not related to the company's alleged maintenance difficulties.

Marc Reddy, previously deputy managing director at First Hampshire and Dorset, took over the position on March 22. Karl Duncan, engineering director, was also replaced at the same time, by Phil Pannell, formerly quality assurance manager for First UK Bus. First says it cannot comment on his case since an appeal is pending.

# East Lancs MAN decker for NEC show

East Lancs is planning to have its latest development concept, the Euro-styled double-decker MAN at the NEC for a UK launch at the end of this year.

MAN's A48 Euro IV chassis has been at the Blackburn facility for some weeks and the design team is busy developing a new body which East Lancs claims will meet European requirements and UK legislation.

Sales director John Horn said: "We've always been told it was impossible to build the UK headroom requirements into a vehicle restricted to just 4m height, but we've found a way to do it.

"It means we'll be able to export it to Europe and build longer double deckers with high seating capacity for UK markets on the same chassis."

The A48 will be built over the next few weeks then taken to Germany for extensive testing. It is planned to return it in time for the show.

Operators can also expect a decker based on the styling of the new Esteem. This will be available on all the popular double-decker chassis and there is a strong possibility the range will include ADL's new Enviro400.

NatEx has ordered 18 Wrightbus Eclipse Geminis

# Bomb hoax driver jailed

**The Glasgow bus driver who made a hoax bomb call to his depot the day after the July 7 attacks has been jailed for 16 months.**

**Thomas Lamb, 33, pleaded guilty to breach of the peace. First's Larkfield depot in the south of the city was evacuated following the call.**

**The defendant's solicitor told the court it had been a joke gone wrong and that his client was a 'buffoon'. Mr Lamb made the call from his own mobile phone and had not attempted to disguise his telephone number. The number was traced through company records and Mr Lamb was immediately suspended, and resigned at a disciplinary hearing three weeks later.**

**The judge said the crime was serious as it was committed in a climate of fear, and that he would have sentenced Mr Lamb to two years in jail but for his guilty plea.**

# All Wright for NatEx

National Express Group subsidiaries Travel London and Travel West Midlands have placed their entire 2006 vehicle purchase budget with Volvo and Wrightbus.

The £7.5m order comprises 60 vehicles, 56 for TWM and four for Travel London.

TWM's vehicles comprise 38 Wrights Urban Eclipse on the 12m Volvo B7RLE chassis, with the D7C 250 hp engine and ZF 6-speed gearbox. TWM will also take 18 Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini deckers on Volvo's 10.6m B7TL chassis, fitted with the D7C 250bhp engine and ZF six-speed gearbox.

The four Travel London deckers couple the D7C 215bhp engine with a Voith four-speed gearbox and a CRT particulate trap.

All TWM vehicles will be fitted with a multiple camera CCTV and driver management system, which provides the head office with key data through a wireless LAN.

Volvo's dealer, Hartshornes Motor Services will provide parts support in the West Midlands and Volvo Truck and Bus Centre London at Croydon will provide both servicing and parts support for the London-based vehicles.

Plaxton's new Centro midibus has won its first fleet order. Arriva North West has ordered 12, for delivery this summer. "We are upgrading a group of routes in Cheshire and saw this as an ideal opportunity to introduce distinctively-styled new vehicles while at the same time evaluating the new Plaxton body," says Malcolm Gilkerson, engineering director at Arriva North West. "We viewed the Centro prototype and have seen Plaxton's new bus production line, and have been impressed by what we saw." Arriva's Centros are on VDL Bus's SB120 chassis, and are 10.7m long.

# Government backs the bus

Transport minister Derek Twigg has endorsed the new Passenger Transport Executive Group (PTEG) report, 'Backing the Bus'.

The report finds that three quarters of PTE bus stations are new or modernised, with many winning awards; that PTEs invested an estimated five times greater per head in public transport than the rest of England outside London, last year; and that the PTEs spend £80m a year on subsidising 100m km of supported services.

The minister said: "Buses offer people flexible, convenient and inexpensive transport and play a vital role in promoting social inclusion and helping to tackle congestion.

"Government has invested heavily in boosting the quality of local bus provision which is good news for passengers who will benefit from more reliable services and a better journey experience.

"The introduction of free local bus travel for older and disabled people, as well as measures such as bus priority programmes, real time bus information and state of the art interchanges will all encourage more people to take the bus.

"I congratulate the PTEs on the work they have done so far in 'backing the bus' and look forward to the government's continued partnership with bus operators and the PTEs."

Rob Donald, chairman of PTEG, said: "85% of public transport journeys in PTE areas are made by bus. The relatively low cost and flexibility of bus services makes the bus a key weapon in the battle against congestion. With most bus users from non-car owning households the bus is also important in tackling social inclusion."

# Brum night buses under threat?

A study by Centro-PTA into night bus services has found that there were only an average of eight passengers per bus in Birmingham on a Friday night, and just over a dozen on Saturdays.

Councillors are calling on operators to do more to prevent the services being withdrawn, as happened in Wolverhampton recently.

In Birmingham there are 11 night bus routes, which operate until 0400hrs on Saturday and Sunday mornings. Two of these routes are subsidised.

The study was set up to look into early morning and late evening public transport across the West Midlands, but also looked at services in the rest of the country.

Centro found that around the country most night buses operate on a commercial basis, concentrated in areas with a high student population.

Manchester and Liverpool have commercially-run night services which require no special security arrangements, but Cardiff's subsidised network is to be withdrawn because of low patronage, despite intensive marketing and on-board security staff.

# Briefly

**Wrightbus has been shortlisted for the Institute of Mechanical Engineers' prestigious Manufacturing Excellence (MX) Award. The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry Alan Johnson says: "The future of manufacturing depends on the industry raising investment, applying science and innovation, best practice and skills to create even better products the world wants to buy. The MX Awards show it can be done." The awards will be held in London on June 29.**

**Stagecoach Group's corporate website has been shortlisted in the Best Website FTSE250 category of the Investor Relations Best Practice Awards. Steve Stewart, Stagecoach's head of media and public affairs says: "The new website is part of our ongoing committment to effective communications with our investors, customers and other key stakeholders." Stagecoach Group's website was redesigned late last year by Investis. National Express Group has also been nominated. The result will be announced on May 4 in London.**

**Peter Lee, the founder of Durham Travel Services, has been released from prison after serving two years for forgery, theft and false accounting. He was jailed for three years in March 2004 for stealing almost £600,000 from the company. He spent most of the money on a prostitute called 'Sultry Tia'. DTS was formed after a management buy-out of the former United bus company but went bankrupt after the court case, putting 170 people out of work.**

**A Lothian Buses' mechanic has won a pay-out after being injured at work. George McEwan won £1125 after injuring his hand and wrist after a fall in April 2002. He slipped on spilled coolant fluid. The judge reduced the pay-out from the maximum £4500 due to the "contributory negligence" of Mr McEwan.**

COACHES

# Galloway steps up quality

## Suffolk operator reaches for the stars with new Van Hools

Galloway European, the Suffolk-based operator, has invested in four unique Van Hools in a bid to improve its margins.

New Sapphire Star branding is central to its approach to justifying the investment in the four, 13-metre Astrons – coaches entirely specified by Galloway to give huge legroom and luggage space but maintain proportion in the appearance.

"Bernie Miles, our commercial manager, has steered the project," said MD David Cattermole. "We were worried about going to 15 metres but keen to get some extra length without making our vehicles look outsized.

"At 49 seats on three axles, the new Van Hools offer a high level of comfort while low seating capacity enables us to conform to the maximum gross weight when we have a full vehicle."

The four vehicles – each differently coloured, and each with the name of a star constellation – have begun their life at Galloway on private hire and corporate duties this year, but the Sapphire Star branding is already affixed to some tours and will then be integrated fully with Galloway's tour programme as a premium product.

"We couldn't put the extra investment into the vehicles without charging it to the consumer. We are now quietly confident that the rates we get will justify the decision to go for such a high specification," said Mr Cattermole.

The brand's visionary is Bernie Miles, commercial director, who adopted the Sapphire Star name after the Armstrong Siddeley car which, he says, managed to provide luxury without being as out of reach as a Bentley: "I know everyone's done a Silver Service, so we were looking for a similar idea with a quality feel, but a logo which could be attached to the brand.

"The Sapphire Star tours are not just the coaches but four-star hotels. We have programmed some departures and though I can't yet say whether Sapphire Star has been the reason, our bookings are 13.5% up this year," Mr Miles told *CBW*.

In the summer there are occasions when all four vehicles will be touring, and Miles said this may show whether the brand is working. On private hire, Galloways expects to get 25% higher rates while tours see prices lifted 15% by the premium branding.

**TECH SPEC**

**Vehicles** DAF XE 355/Van Hool Astron T916 13 metres
**Engines** DAF XE 355C six-cylinder 483bhp
**Seating** 49 Grand Deluxe, with leather headrest inlays, side-slide feature, adjustable footrests, three-point seatbelts, and drop-down trays and cupholders
**Other equipment** CD/DVD via 21-inch monitor at front, plus 15-inch drop-down monitor in gangway. TravelPilot DX-V Sat Nav transmitted through multimedia dash to monitors, if required. Trafficmaster 'live' route information to avoid traffic jams. Climate control. Webasto pre-heating. Driver's door. Driver's bunk. Built-in vacuum cleaner. Centre sunken freshwater toilet. Central locking luggage hold.

**Special features include (clockwise from top left) side-shift aisle seats with massive legroom, leather headrest inlays and detail, centrally-locked luggage area, and seatback tables with cupholders, together with magazine nets**

# Operators still waiting for DfT reply

**Despite weeks of waiting, the Department for Transport has yet to reply to operators' calls for fuel duty rebate for coaches.**

**The Fair Tax, not Fuel Tax campaign launched by *CBW* on February 22 asked readers to send a letter to the Secretary of State for Transport, Alistair Darling MP, demanding that he look again at the unfair policy of rebating fuel duty for bus mileage, to train operators, levying no fuel duty at all on airlines, yet charging coach operators the full amount.**

**"Weeks later I am still waiting in anticipation of a positive response but I am not holding my breath," said Epsom Coaches director Andrew Richmond. "I am still awaiting a response to a letter I sent John Prescott eight years ago regarding transport issues..."**

**The letter sent by dozens of UK coach operators points out the inequality of a rebate handed out freely to every other sector of passenger transport yet denied to coach passengers, who would benefit from paying less for a service which, for many, is as essential as the bus.**

**"If operators spent this long responding to their clients, they'd be out of business within months," said *CBW* editor Mark Williams. "Aside from a postcard of acknowledgement, the Department seems unable or unwilling to respond to carefully considered argument.**

**"There is one question I would like answered: What is the purpose of fuel duty rebates like BSOG? If Mr Darling could find the time to answer that simple question, we could then begin a rational debate about this issue. We have no intention of letting the government's obfuscation deter us from this fair-minded campaign."**

**■ Have you had a reply from Mr Darling yet? Let us know, or join the campaign by sending the campaign letter to the Secretary of State for Transport. Either email *mark.williams@rouncymedia.co.uk*, or have the campaign letter faxed back by calling 01733 293240**

# Speak now on the LEZ

The Confederation of Passenger Transport has reminded operators that the consultation period for the London Low Emission Zone ends on Monday (April 24).

It has urged its members to use facts it has assembled on its website to shape thinking at Transport for London about the prospect of a £200 fee for entering the LEZ - broadly the area inside the M25 - if your vehicles are not Euro III compliant.

In its guidance, CPT says the combined emissions of PM (particulates) from both buses and coaches is just 2.1% of the total in outer London. It points out that discouraging coaches from London will increase modal shift to cars, aggravating the emissions problem, and will have a safety implication since coaches are seven times safer than cars per vehicle mile.

The CPT has encouraged operators to list non-compliant vehicles in their fleets and sum up the cost of making them compliant, first to Euro III in readiness for the 2008 start date, and then to Euro IV in 2010. It suggests asking TfL for a delay of two years both to allow the vehicle parc to catch up and to give time to get to grips with NOx issues set by Euro IV.

In this week's Open Platform, on page 20, a reader questions the cost and usefulness of the LEZ.

■ Details of the consultation are at *www.tfl.gov.uk/tfl/low-emission-zone/consultation.asp* Members of the CPT can download the response advice at *www.cpt-uk.org*

Non-Euro III coaches face a £200 fee under the LEZ rules

# Ellen Smith partner to retire

John White, partner in Ellen Smith Tours, has announced that he is to retire from the business this year.

"It will be a gradual exit, as I'm not expecting to leave until the end of the year," Mr White, 60, told *CBW*.

Mr White's father owned E Whites of Calver. White jnr, though, went into teaching.

After 14 years, his family asked if he'd like to set up a coach tour enterprise for them: "It was the post-deregulation era, so they asked if I'd set up a tour programme. Tours are all I've ever done.... I have no interest at all in vehicles."

Mr White's big break came when Ellen Smith Tours was sold off by municipal operator Rossendale Travel, then being run by Edgar Oldham, as it set its focus on stage carriage work. Mr White and Paul Targett bought the business, and now run the depot and travel agencies based in Derbyshire and Lancashire.

"It's been really worthwhile. I've enjoyed every day," Mr White said.

# Briefly

**■ A coach driver had to leave the M62 at junction 24 near Alney Top when he spotted smoke pouring from his vehicle. Firefighters who attended the scene discovered that the smoke had been coming from his exhaust and although the engine was damaged, there was no fire.**

**■ This week's CV Show is the launchpad for AES Solutions' new AdBlue automated pump and storage system. The company takes its environmental duties seriously, declaring its offices 'carbon neutral.' It also says that within six months, its delivery vehicles will also be carbon neutral.**

**■ The European Union energy council is expected to ratify proposals from the EC to increase the use of carbon-neutral fuels at more than 5% blend within fossil road fuels. The plan to increase the use of 'biomass energy' produced by vegetable matter into heating systems and electricity production will be discussed on June 8.**

**■ Research has revealed that train driving has become the new plumbing, with highly-qualified professionals leaving teaching, banking and other white collar industries to join rail companies. The allure of £35,000 salaries and a 34-hour week has, according to Aslef, tempted people to ditch badly-paid academic jobs. There is no sign of a similar shift to coach driving...**

**■ Jonckheere has announced it will be showing its new flagship – simply named the Jonckheere – at this year's Euro Bus Expo show at the NEC. Although unveiled with a VDL SBR4000 chassis at Kortrijk last year, in the UK it will be available on Euro IV Volvo chassis... the B12B in both 380bhp and 420bhp, and the same powers on the B12M. The 13.4-metre length is likely to be the show model.**

FINANCIAL

# Telling's tale of 2005

## Year of ups and downs, but group boss remains confident

**Andrew Jarosz**

A story of cutbacks and reorganisation has emerged in the annual set of results for the Twickenham-based Telling Golden Miller Group plc (TGMG), where profitability slipped during 2005, despite remedial action during the year in selling the London-based bus operations to National Express Group.

Chairman and chief executive Stephen Telling said there had been an encouraging start to this year: "Having largely reshaped the group, the next steps are to reduce the impact of central costs by profitable expansion and restoration of operating margins."

Results for the year ended December 31, 2005 show that group turnover increased by 8.2% from £38.4m to £41.5m, but this was made up by an unusual mixture of continuing business nearly doubling from £14.5m to £26.9m, discontinued business turnover slipping from £23.9m to £11.4m, and new acquisitions adding £3.2m. Unfortunately the operating profit of £3.4m in 2004 became an operating loss for 2005 of £397,000.

Selling the London Bus division to West Midlands Travel in June 2005 raised £20.4m in cash, giving a profit to shareholders of £14.8m, of which a Special Dividend of £13.75m was paid to shareholders in August 2005.

Putting these figures into the accounts raised the Group's pre-tax profits to £14m from £2.9m in 2004, but after interest payments, tax deductions and dividend payment, the retained profit for the year fell 92% from £2.04m to £154,000. The Group's net worth rose slightly from £9.8m at the end of 2004 to £10m at the end of 2005.

Although some divisional turnover figures are available in the preliminary statement, it is clear that both the continuing business and new acquisitions delivered an operating loss. Only the London bus business, which was sold in June, contributed an operating profit of £420,000.

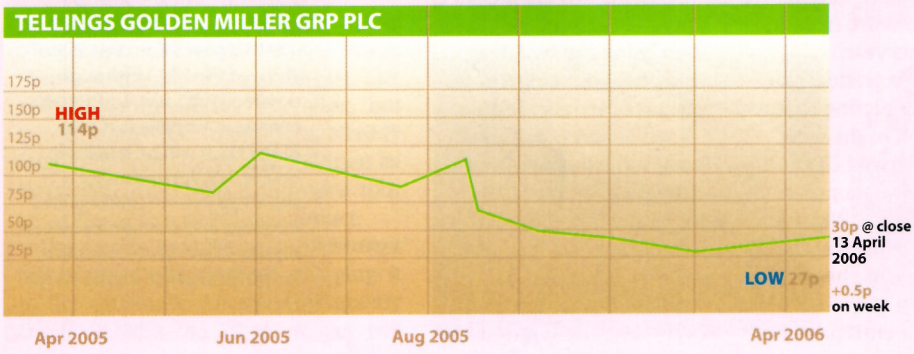
It appears from the statement that the East Anglian operations of Burtons Coaches caused the biggest black hole. Network Colchester, purchased from Arriva in September 2004, failed to make a profit, having been a significant loss maker for Arriva, but TGMG claims action taken during last year to change the network, vehicles and working practices, will return the operation to profit. Burtons bus and coach operations also made a significant loss, largely through the impact of fuel and labour costs. During the year contract prices for bus work were revised, but an increase in coaching revenues of 18% was insufficient to keep up with costs. Mr Telling said Burtons was the only exception to the encouraging start this year, but action was being taken.

Tellings Golden Miller boss Stephen Telling

TGMG's saviour appears to be the Classic Coaches operation in both County Durham and Tyne & Wear. Turnover was up 18% at £10.4m, with bus operations turnover up by 19% at £3m. This includes the 'U Call' and 'Care Call' services operated for Tyne & Wear PTE. Overall the profit from the North East was comparable to 2004.

National Express contracting services from Portsmouth and Cambridge depots also incurred a loss during the year, largely through fuel and labour costs, and the bus operation between Portsmouth and Southampton was closed in August. In London although the Linkline business remained buoyant, the Heathrow aircrew business acquired from National Express failed to perform, and two airline clients left.

Mr Telling says key issues this year are managing the relocation of the head office and Twickenham operations, finalising the reorganisation of Burtons, and hedging against fuel cost exposure.




## Briefly

**Veolia Transport UK completed its acquisition of Dunn-Line plc on April 12. The company received acceptances for 89.46% of the share capital. The remainder will be compulsorily purchased under stock exchange rules. Veolia will now make an application for Dunn-Line shares to be removed from the AIM. At the same time , Christopher Ross, non-executive chairman, and Graham Spooner, non-executive director, resigned from the board of Dunn-Line with immediate effect.**

**The OFT has announced it will not refer the completed acquisition of Traction Group by Stagecoach Group last December to the Competition Commission. Traction Group was the sixth largest bus operator in the UK, and the largest in private ownership.**

**The OFT is considering whether to refer the acquisition of Premier Bus by Arriva in February to the Competition Commission. Premier is the parent company of bus operator MK Metro in Milton Keynes.**

**Swiss Postbus, see page 22, reports falling profits in 2005. Earnings before interest and tax fell to £12.8m from £16.3m in 2004. The company blames rising fuel prices as passenger numbers increased from 102m to 105m.**

**The Financial Services Authority (FSA) handed out its third-largest fine ever to Deutsche Bank last week over the sale of shares in Scania. Volvo hired the bank to sell its £1.1bn stake in March 2004, but during the sale the bank began to buy shares for itself, without informing the market. This left the bank open to allegations of deliberately distorting the market to maintain the share price, although the firm was found not guilty on this count. It was fined £6.4m for "failing to observe proper standards of market conduct."**

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# Regional News

**CBW takes a look at the big issues where you live in our round-up of the regions. If you've got a local issue you would like us to cover, contact Andrew Peace at *andrew.peace@rouncymedia.co.uk***

## SCOTLAND

**First Glasgow** suspended services to Castlemilk for two nights last week after attacks on its buses. Nine windows were smashed and one driver was injured, though not seriously.

Security manager Alan Pert said: "It is unfortunate that we were forced to divert services away from Castlemilk on Tuesday and Wednesday night. However, the safety of our passengers and driving staff remains paramount."

A councillor said: "It is unacceptable that a large part of Glasgow is without public transport due to unaddressed criminal behaviour. We hope the police will treat this issue with the urgency it deserves."

Stagecoach co-founder Ann Gloag

■ Ann Gloag, co-founder of **Stagecoach Group**, has donated £4m towards converting a ferry into the world's largest non-military hospital ship. Richard Branson has also donated a substantial amount to the project, which is backed by Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

The ship, called Africa Mercy, is currently undergoing a £30m refit on Tyneside. It will have six operating theatres, an intensive care unit, an 80-bed ward, an ophthalmic unit and two X-ray tomography scanners.

Ms Gloag, a former nurse, has not been put off by previous attempts to send aid to the African continent. She said: "My previous experience of building hospitals in Africa had been that you take in 5,000 blankets and three weeks later, there is none. If you take specialist equipment then find that it's taken, that can be dispiriting. This way you know exactly where the money is going."

It will sail for Africa in July and is expected to perform 7,000 operations a year. The vessel is 500ft long, weighs 16,500 tonnes, has eight decks and a crew of 500.

## N. IRELAND

A bus company boss in Belfast says he is the first private operator in generations to run stage carriage services in the city.

**Redbus**, a sister company of **City Sightseeing**, has been granted a licence to run the number 77 'Gasworks to Waterworks' route in the city. The service was dropped by Belfast Corporation Transport at the start of the Troubles as it cuts across the Falls, Shankill and Crumlin Roads.

Joe Lavelle of City Sightseeing said: "We will have two modern low-floor one-man-operator buses on the route and if business picks up we will go for a bus every 15 minutes.

"This is the first time a private sector operator has broken the Translink monopoly on stage carriage services in Belfast."

■ After four years in service - and after carrying over 100,000 school children - **Translink's** award winning Community Safety Bus has been given a complete makeover. The revamp, with new graphics inspired by pop band Gorillaz and a new on-board DVD and hidden digital CCTV system, coincides with the launch of Translink's new TravelSafe DVD. The bus's drivers are also trained safety officers. The project gives pupils information on personal safety while using public transport, and illustrates the potential impact of antisocial activities like vandalism and trespassing.

"The new livery and graphics were designed to reflect the diversity of the Northern Ireland community who use Translink services on a daily basis," says Safety Bus co-ordinator, Susan O'Neill. "The funky artwork represents everyone from school children to wheelchair users, senior citizens to parents with young children and it gives the young people a bus they can really identify with and take ownership of.

"Over the years we've found that young people respond much better to first hand experience and information that doesn't 'preach' at them, so we've worked hard to develop an approach which is designed to get the message across without being too patronising!"

Pupils and teachers celebrate Translink's Community Safety Bus's funky new look

## NORTH

Operators in south Yorkshire or the East Midlands may be glad to hear about a new storage service being offered by

## Briefly

■ **An illegal diesel refinery has been discovered by police in Northern Ireland. It had the capacity to produce 100,000 litres per week. The police also found three tonnes of toxic sludge at the farmhouse in Derrynoose, Keady**

■ **Newport Council, Wales, is piloting a new on-demand minibus service for disabled people. Called NewLink, the door-to-door service only covers part of the city and costs £1 per journey, leading to complaints from some campaigners. The service will be rolled out further as more volunteer drivers are taken on.**

## Briefly

**An elderly woman on a bus in Liverpool was injured when the vehicle came under attack by a mob of brick-throwing youths. She was hit on the head despite sitting on the other side of the vehicle to where it was hit. The incident happened in the Toxteth area of the city on Arriva's 75 service. The youths ran off before police arrived.**

**In a similar incident in Telford, a mother and baby were covered in shattered glass after a brick was thrown through a bus window. The bus had just pulled away from the bus stop when two youths were seen throwing bricks. About £500 of damage was caused. The mother says both would have been seriously injured if they had been sitting one row further back.**

**A five year old girl seriously injured after stepping in front of a bus in Warwickshire last week is making a good recovery in hospital say police. She was hit by the number 57 Stagecoach bus in Bedworth. A 35 year old man walking with the girl suffered cuts and bruises to his head.**

The London Marathon will mean a few road closures this Sunday

**South Yorkshire Storage**.

The service will suit a range of customers: from those wanting to keep a vehicle-for-sale in tip top condition, those with severely damaged vehicles they would prefer to keep out of sight, or even those needing somewhere to maintain or base their vehicles. Space can be let for any length of time, and SYS offers other services, such as recovery, valeting and servicing.

The company has a large warehouse in Rotherham, near the M1, A1 and M18 motorways, and within 15 minutes are most of the major dealers. Also on the doorstep is the Barnsley Breaker's Yard.

The warehouse has high roller-shutter doors, so even deckers on suspended tow will fit inside. See *www.south-yorkshire-storage.co.uk* for more details.

## WALES

Eight **Arriva** bus drivers in North Wales have signed a petition asking for better enforcement of parking regulations. Drivers in Buckley Cross are regularly forced to make reversing manoeuvres on the town's roads because of illegally parked cars.

A statement from the group says: "The police or traffic wardens are apparently unable or unwilling to remedy the position." Les Rimmer, Arriva North West and Wales general manager says: "Some action is urgently needed to alleviate this situation." The police deny turning a blind eye. The town only has one part time parking warden.

## LONDON

**Arriva London** has terminated the employment of 27 drivers aged over 65. The company says the move was necessary after losing several contracts with TfL.

The move affects the South Croydon, Beddington Farm and Norwood depots. Mark Yexley, managing director of Arriva London, says the company was faced with 130 drivers being left surplus to requirements after losing the 468, 68, N68 and X68 services.

He said: "By stopping driver recruitment elsewhere in the business, and by not continuing to offer employment to the 27 drivers who are already over retirement age. We have been able to accommodate this contract loss and absorb the number of surplus drivers that remained."

■ Tower Hamlets Council has fitted a satellite vehicle tracking system to its fleet of 60 minibuses and coaches. The system, by Digicore, works alongside the fleet's existing routing and scheduling package to make the collection and delivery of passengers as efficient as possible. John Stevens, Tower Hamlet's transport manager, says: "As well as achieving greater control of the routes and schedules, the new system will also reduce the administrative burden and workload for both drivers and office-based employees."

■ Roads in central, east and south east London will close this Sunday (April 23) to make way for the London Marathon. The marathon starts at 0900hrs in Greenwich Park and winds around east and south east London before joining the north bank of the Thames from Monument to Westminster, and from there to the finish in St James's Park.

The route and approach roads south of the Thames together with Victoria Embankment and Whitehall will be closed at 0700hrs. Remaining roads north of the Thames will close at 0800hrs. Staged road-reopening starts from around 1030hrs. The roads - apart from The Mall which will remain closed - are expected to be fully re-opened by 1900hrs.

## Roadworks

■ **M74 Hamilton**
**Until May 12:** Contraflow and roadworks on M74 both ways at J5 A725 (Raith Interchange).

■ **M8 Renfrewshire**
**Until May 10:** Slip road onto motorway closed and delays expected due to bridge maintenance work on M8 Eastbound at J28 (Glasgow Airport).

■ **M90 Fife**
**Until May 1:** Narrow lanes southbound at J1 A921 / A985 (Admiralty).

■ **M56 Cheshire**
**Until April 30:** Lane closed on exit slip road westbound at J7 A556 (Bowdon).

■ **M6 Staffordshire**
**Until June 30:** Speed restriction of 40 mph due to resurfacing work on M6 Northbound between J12 A5 (Gailey) and J13 A449 (Stafford South).

■ **M1 Hertfordshire**
**Until December 31, 2008:** Speed restriction of 40 mph and narrow lanes both ways between J6A M25 and J10 M1 (Luton Airport).

■ **M11 Cambridgeshire**
**Until May 1:** Speed restriction of 40 mph due to resurfacing work and contraflow on M11 both ways between J9 A11 (Newmarket Turnoff) and J8 A120 / A1250 / B1256 (Stansted Airport / Bishops Stortford).

■ **M4 South Gloucestershire**
**Between 2100 and 0530 until April 27:** Roadworks during the night and barrier repairs on M4 both ways at J20 M5 (Almondsbury Interchange/M5).

■ **M48 South Gloucestershire**
**Between 0930 and 1600 until April 30:** Lane closed and speed restriction of 40 mph both ways at J1 A403 / B4461 (Aust).

■ **M5 North Somerset**
**Until July 31:** Speed restriction both ways between J19 A369 (Portishead) and J20 B3133 (Clevedon).

■ **A39 Somerset**
**Until May 21:** Road closed due to roadworks on A39 both ways between B3135 and A37.

*In association with*
trafficlink
*www.trafficlink.co.uk*

## Briefly

**Parents of primary school children in Renfrewshire, Scotland, are challenging council plans to introduce fares for pupils living less than two miles from school. A flat charge of £1 will be levied from August. The move will save £238,000 a year and affects 1,300 children. It is part of a £7.6m package of service cuts in the district. The parents have formed the School Transport Action Group to fight the plans. Supportive councillors say they will take the case to the Scottish Court of Session if necessary.**

**Wilts & Dorset bus company has apologised to parents after children were twice refused entry to service buses for not paying the full fare. Parents had been assured after the first occasion that it would not happen again. Pupils were left waiting at the stop in the hope of getting a seat on the school bus service. Half fares are only available on one route in Christchurch before 9am, leaving some drivers confused.**

**Northumberland County Council's plan to withdraw free transport for faith school pupils has met opposition from both parents and headteachers during the public consultation. The council says it has yet to make up its mind on the plan, to be implemented in September 2007. The move would save £600,000 per year.**

**A school in Leicestershire will publish the number plates of cars belonging to parents who repeatedly park illegally outside the school. "If it happens again we'll inform the police and they have agreed to prosecute," says the headmistress.**

**CCTV cameras on school buses in Nottinghamshire are being hailed as the cause of a drop in bad behaviour. About 80 buses in the county have been fitted with the digital cameras at a cost of £2,000 for single-deckers and £2,500 for double-deckers. Drivers say they feel more comfortable with the cameras onboard.**

# Kids get transport lessons

## Safety on schoolbuses promoted

Year 7 pupils at Hreod Parkway School in Swindon underwent pilot 'SAFE EXIT' (School Transport Emergency Evacuation Training) last month as part of a wider programme designed to encourage responsible behaviour on school transport.

The event was coordinated between the school, the local police and fire brigade, Thamesdown Transport, BUSK and the Swindon Bus Committee.

The training is delivered in a two-hour session. It encourages users to be aware of their own safety, helps pupils understand the dangers they face on transport and how to deal with them, identifies the risks to all road users as a result of their actions and raises awareness of the consequences to families who lose somebody close to them.

Sgt Anne Egan of Swindon police said: "The aim of the exercise is to familiarise pupils and staff with skills, knowledge and understanding of what to do in an emergency evacuation. The safety of children when travelling on school transport is a responsibility we must all share. The school is promoting good citizenship and responsibility in a very practical way which is topical and relevant to the whole community."

A statement from Thamesdown Transport says: "Inappropriate behaviour on buses is potentially dangerous to passengers, drivers and other members of the public. If we do nothing about it, it could be argued we are condoning it.

"If we can encourage people to play their part in reducing such incidents because they understand the risks that are posed to themselves and others, then the project will have been very worthwhile."

# Welsh pupils vandalise own school bus

Some Welsh school pupils had their school bus service withdrawn for a day before the Easter holidays after vandalism on one of the brand new buses running the service.

Denbigh High School pupils tore trim from the windows and stole safety equipment from the bus, operated by Alpine Travel in Llandudno.

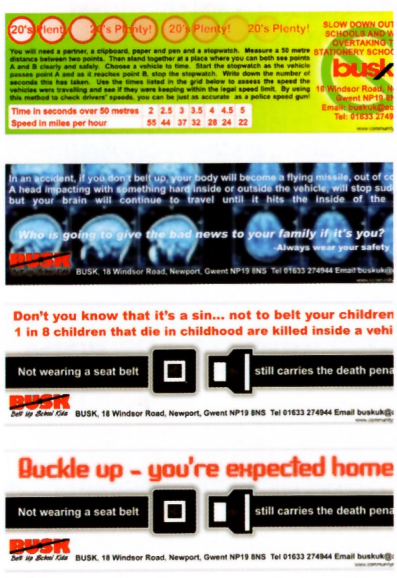
Cllr Dewi Owens, lead member for lifelong learning at Denbighshire County Council, said: "Sadly it is a handful of pupils causing the problem. They have been warned about their behaviour, but the situation has worsened.

"The council has spent in excess of £20,000 on having two single deck buses instead of a double decker on this route.

"This is money which could have been spent elsewhere, but we were prepared to make this investment in an attempt to solve the problem."

CCTV footage is being inspected with a view to banning those responsible. Letters were sent to parents explaining why the service was withdrawn.

Officers from the council travelled on the bus the rest of the week to monitor behaviour. The headmaster was unavailable for comment due to the Easter break, but is said to be very supportive.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1 in 8 children that die in childhood are killed inside a vehi
Not wearing a seat belt
still carries the death pena
Buckle up - you're expected home
Not wearing a seat belt
still carries the death pena
BUSK, 18 Windsor Road, Newport, Gwent NP19 8NS Tel 01633 274944 Email buskuk@

# BUSK's bookmark scheme

The Belt Up School Kids (BUSK) campaign is offering personalised wristbands and bookmarks to operators – which also carry BUSK's safety messages – to mark School Safety Week in September.

The bookmarks come in four designs, and are left blank on the reverse for the operator's own advertising or sales message. The price includes all artwork and design – 5,000 cost £390, rising to £600 for 20,000. The delivery charge will be minimal.

The message on the wristbands says: 'Belted bods are safer', leaving enough room for the operator's logo or website address. The minimum order is for 1,000 bands, at 33p each, plus a one-off £35 charge for the operator information. E-mail *buskuk@aol.com* for more information.

# Rallying round

## It's that time of year again

This weekend the seafront at Brighton will be transformed into the fanciest coach park in the country as the UK Coach Rally hits town. Up to 80 competitors, and 16 major exhibitors, will be showcasing the very best the industry has to offer.

Saturday sees an 80-mile drive out for competitors, followed by the driving tests in the afternoon and a Gala Dinner Dance at the Hilton Brighton Metropole in the evening. Judging in the Concours D'elegance competition takes place on Sunday morning, with the driving test finals and the award presentations in the afternoon.

Mark Shaw of The Travellers Choice won the driver of the year award in 2005, and Tellings Golden Miller won Coach of the Year - will they do it again this year?

The 52nd UK Coach Rally takes place on Saturday and Sunday, on Madeira Drive, Brighton. If you are going, *CBW* gives you an idea of what to expect.

# Who's there

### East Lancs

East Lancs is showing a 12.4m decker for Roadliner Coaches of Poole, specially renamed Roadlyner in traditional East Lancs style.

Similar to vehicles already supplied to Weavaway Coaches and PPH of St. Albans, it is based on a Volvo B9TL chassis and includes 102 MTB Buckingham seats, three point belts, removable seats to meet Schedule Service DDA compliance, LED electronic destination, Look CCTV System, Autosound DVD System, tables and soft interior trim.

### Esker

Esker Bus and Coach is planning to show a minimum of six vehicles from its 16 to 53 seat range – headed by the new Esker Divo 12 metre coach based on a VDL SB 4000 chassis.

Alan White, Esker UK's general manager, said: "Customer demand for deliveries and low stock levels do not permit us to be specific at this time. However, some customers have already agreed to loan back vehicles for the rally for which we are especially grateful."

The Esker team will be out in force, the UK representatives once again being joined by colleagues from Ireland including chief executive Danny McGee.

### Plaxton

Plaxton will have one of the most intriguing vehicles in the show on its display. Wootten of Chesham have ordered eight new Panthers with an extended front overhang ready for the fitment of a wheelchair lift, one of which will be on Plaxton's stand.

Plaxton will also show Johnson Bros of Worksop's new Paragon, on an Irisbus Eurorider chassis, and a hi-spec Cheetah minicoach from Shetland-based Jamiesons. Its aftercare company Bus & Coach Glazing will also be there, highlighting its recently extended coverage.

### Caetano

Caetano will show a pair of Enigmas – one from Brentwood Coaches and the other from Simpsons Coaches of Aberdeen.

Brentwoods high spec vehicle features 49 "Faisa" recliners, centre toilet with hot water boiler, fridge and continental door, full Blaupunkt sound and DVD system, roof mounted Sutrak Air Conditioning, headrest cushions with inserts, wheel trims and full soft trim including full draw curtains and centre gangway carpet. Simpsons is similar, but with sat nav and reversing camera. Both vehicles are on the Volvo B12B chassis, with 420bhp engine and I Shift, and both will be finished in their owner's liveries.

### BMC

BMC will show three buses at UK Rally, a 1100FE school bus and updated versions of the KingLong 6127 coach and the Probus 850 midicoach.

An auto option and revised front suspension and steering have been added to the 35 seat Probus. The company's director, Bus & Coach, Paul Nicholson said: "Customers who have drove the first models, and now this one, are staggered by the improvements we've made."

A huge number of changes to the KingLong specification have taken place since the first example was shown last year. These include: double glazing, a new three level lighting system, toilet and exit door fitted to O/S, new style lift up roof vents complete with extractor system, air con relocated to front of vehicle for greater stability, a larger rear window to serve as emergency exit, upgraded under floor lockers and trimmed side casings and centre roof. The driveline is unchanged.

### Mentor

Mentor Coach & Bus is concentrating on promoting the two-axle MAN Noge, supplied by subsidiary dealership UK Coach & Bus.

The MAN Noge on display at Brighton features a ZF automatic gearbox with integral retarder and is equipped with 49 seats, centre sunken toilet, air conditioning, TV/video, tinted double glazing, carpets, curtains, overhead aircraft style lockers and pneumatic luggage compartment flaps.

WORLD

# World's biggest fuel cell fleet

Hamburg (HHA) is now operating the world's largest single fleet of fuel cell buses and has already announced plans to buy up to 30 additional vehicles of this type within the next 3-4 years.

This follows the successful trial of three EU-sponsored fuel cell buses in the course of a recent two-year project.

In 2005 Hamburg underlined its strong commitment to environmental driveline technology by the formation of the subsidiary HySolutions company. It has now outlined the city's plans for a large-scale conversion to fuel cell practice in the public transport fleet. The enlargement of the Hamburg hydrogen fleet, which now uses six Mercedes-Benz Citaro fuel cell buses formerly operated elsewhere in Europe in addition to the three in service since 2003, is seen as the first stage of systematically extending the application of the technology to the entire bus fleet.

The announcement by Dr. Michael Freytag, the Hamburg Minister of Metropolitan Development, has revealed plans to add another 20 to 30 hydrogen-fuelled buses as soon as practicable after the launch of the new generation of fuel cell buses in 2009. Freytag also spoke of the long term conversion of the entire Hamburg bus fleet of 700 vehicles to environmentally acceptable drivelines.

The Hamburg scheme continues to be supported by EU funds under the recent HyFLEET-CUTE programme and includes use of a purpose-built hydrogen fuelling station at one of the public transport operator's main garages.

By the end of the year, an additional station in the city may also be opened to use by independent, private users.

# Wright's hybrids doing well in America

Further sales successes in North America for Optima Bus of Kansas means continuing business for Wrightbus, which supplies space frames and other components to the midibus manufacturer.

Seven years ago Wrights made an agreement with the then Chance Corporation to design, and supply components for the low floor midibus, which features many successful UK components. The Opus midibus has been selling in steady numbers of up to 300 units per year, in a fairly conservative US market, and last year Optima Bus showed its hybrid-electric model at Dallas Expo.

Recent successes include an order for 600 Opus midis for Miami-Dade Transit of Florida and an order for 45 with an option for a further 60 for the Chicago Transit Authority.

# US to import Chinese hybrid

A novel hybrid-electric bus, developed at a cost of over $4 million (£2.2 million) by Wu Zhou Long Motors, China, and incorporating a number of patents, is one of the 'alternative technology' vehicles for which AFV Solutions, of Arizona, has obtained marketing rights in the US, Mexico and India. AFV Solutions is a diversified energy company dedicated to seeking and refining alternatives to petrol.

The US company has chosen the Chinese maker, which also lists CNG and LPG vehicles in its programme, as an ideal partner for its own range, which has been awarded the only (US) EPA-certified propane bi-fuel system, now available in the North American market in Ford 4.6 litre power units.

AFV-S is currently in the planning stage for an expanded test and demonstration site in California. Access to the Chinese hybrid-drive technology after four years of development will allow the American company to sell the vehicles with immediate effect in Mexico and India and, after fulfilling all regulatory requirements, in the US.

# Biggest ever Aussie order

A massive 505 vehicle order placed by the State Transit Authority of New South Wales, which runs a 2000-strong bus fleet in Sydney, represents the largest single capital investment by a bus operator in Australian history.

Sydney Buses carries over 200 million passengers annually with demand showing a rise of 3% per year. The city is hoping the modern fleet will attract more riders and, in turn, reduce pressure on the road system.

The order was placed with Custom Coaches, of Smithfield, NSW, a company which recently celebrated its Golden Jubilee. It won its first order in 1955 from the NSW Department of Government Transport with a contract for the supply of 125 Leyland-based buses.

The order is shared between Volvo B12 BLE-based buses with Euro V-compliant diesel engines (250bhp), and Mercedes-Benz O 500 LE units (255bhp) which will be CNG-powered. Engine specifications reflect the desire to introduce a stronger environmental factor into urban transport practice.

# Licence slashed

## Preston operator sees fleet cut and repute tanished by traffic commissioner

A fourteen-day licence penalty, an indefinite fleet cut, a formal warning, tarnished repute and five strict undertakings have been delivered to Stephen Ronald Ashton, trading as Bank View Travel of Leyland Road, Penwortham, Preston, Lancashire, following a public inquiry on March 3.

The written decision from deputy traffic commissioner Mark Hinchliffe indicated that the inquiry had been held to consider regulatory action in view of prohibition notices issued, maintenance shortcomings, an apparent failure to comply with undertakings, an apparent contravention of the licence, and concerns regarding good repute, financial standing and professional competence.

The deputy traffic commissioner decided that the number of vehicles authorised on the licence should be curtailed to one vehicle only for the 14 days from April 9 to April 22 inclusive, and then be curtailed indefinitely to only four vehicles.

In issuing a formal warning against the licence, he indicated that any future failure to scrupulously comply with a stiff set of undertakings will result in revocation and disqualification.

He also found Mr Ashton's repute tarnished but not lost, and his repute as transport manager tarnished but not lost.

Undertakings, which Mr Hinchliffe indicated at the public inquiry, would be recorded and attached to the licence, are as follows.

1. Safety inspections will be pre-planned and never more than six weeks apart. All safety inspections will include a roller brake test, with gauge results recorded. Proper records to be kept for five years.
2. Mr Ashton will attend the five-day VOSA course for PSV mechanics and retain evidence of satisfactory completion. Such course to be completed by July 1.
3. The agreement with the FTA, dated June 2005, will be fully compliant with and not changed without the explicit agreement of the Traffic Commissioner. Proof of compliance will be retained for five years.
4. Drivers will operate a nil defect driver reporting system, and records to be kept for 15 months.
5. All drivers employed by this operator will have training provided by an outside consultant on new duties as driver, such training to be provided within four weeks of the commencement of their employment, and proof of compliance will be kept for five years.

In addition, VOSA will be asked to carry out a licence performance re-appraisal, whenever it takes place, and it must include a check of compliance with all undertakings.

## Other decisions

**SCOTTISH**

**Aberdeen, November 25**
**William George & Georgina Robertson T/A WG & G Robertson, Cuminestown Turriff AB53 5WJ**
*** PSV - S16 - Application refused**
*** PSV - S17 - No action**

**EASTERN**

**Cambridge, March 24**
**Christopher Butler T/A Spotlight Travel, Haddenham,**
*** PSV - S17 - No action**

**Cambridge, March 24**
**Gary Tunstall T/A Arena Niteliners, Somersham, Huntingdon**
*** PSV - S14 - Application granted as applied for**

**Cambridge, March 24**
**Siso Kaur Duley, Parmjit Duley, Amberleaf Transport Ltd, Hounslow**
*** PSV - S14 - Application granted for 3 vehicles. An undertaking was given to the traffic commissioner that Parmjit Duley would become a director of the company within 14 days.**

**NORTH WESTERN**

**Warrington, March 21**
**Susan Zamir, Swadlincote**
*** PSV - S14 - Application granted with conditions. Undertakings recorded.**

**WESTERN**

**Bristol, February 28**
**Janet Kathleen Botley, Brian Henry Botley, Brijan Tours Ltd, Bishops Waltham, Southampton**
*** PSV - S17 - Formal warning in respect of maintenance**

**SOUTH EASTERN AND METROPOLITAN TRAFFIC**

**Eastbourne, March 28**
**Derek & Linda Smith T/A A Plus Buses, Dartford**
*** PSV - S17 - Licence revoked with effect from 23:59 on April 23, 2006.**

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# Radical look at travelling another way

## CITO explores options for industry growth

**William Golden, tourism editor**

Radical plans are beginning to pay dividends for the Consortium of Independent Tour Operators (CITO), which is building on the success of last year and continuing to drive up quality.

The founding aims of the quality drive are manifested in bigger and better vehicles being added to fleets and four and even five-star hotels appearing in members' brochures. The joint purchasing, tour sharing and ATOL licensed air tour operations have grown at a significant rate to the extent that CITO is having to look closely at future staff and premises requirements.

Now in its seventh year, CITO is adapting its plans but, while improving standards and reaching new markets are still the goals, the means of achieving those aims may well have changed. Stephen Rodgers, CITO's administrator, said: "Some of our plans and ambitions in 1999 are not so relevant or necessary today while the dynamic of the industry has also dictated the need for flexibility.

"How many in the coach industry were interested or bothered by the concept of low cost airlines in 1999? Today it is both a threat and an opportunity.

"A threat because low cost airlines at regional airports offer all our clients an alternative way to see Europe. An opportunity because CITO had 50 passengers on a tour of Andalusia in February having flown to Malaga from airports as diverse as Newquay and Norwich.

"The coach industry is not famous for innovation but very quick to follow a good idea. Turkey and Tinsel, Christmas Markets, Door to Door travel. Somebody was brave enough to take the first step and momentum did the rest.

"One of CITO's quality marques is choice of menu at hotels we feature. At first, finding the right hotel was a thankless task - especially in Europe. Within two years it became a selling feature for several operators and wholesalers. Now, choice of menu is such a common industry requirement we actually find it easier to work with hotels than we did five years ago."

Rodgers conceded that nobody has the magic formula for solving the "how to find new passengers" conundrum but said that a fresh approach to the product and marketing was one strategy CITO had been able to develop with its 13 member companies.

He said: "One of them in particular still finds it hard to understand how he is known primarily in his region as a transport company, yet still sells 30 seats on each of our deluxe tours to Canada and New Zealand costing over £3,000. Do it once and maybe you are still selling to your own customers. Do it every time and you are reaching new markets.

"Every member of CITO probably has a different reason for handing over his or her annual fee," added Rodgers. "Some measure the results in purely tangible terms while others are perhaps more convinced by the ideology. What they all share is a desire to develop their business, an open mind to new ideas and a willingness to cooperate with other colleagues in the industry. Recruitment was a major part of CITO's promotional activity in the early years.

"Today we are always looking to grow but any new members will have to share a very specific and forward thinking view of the industry.

■ For more information, contact CITO on 0117 916 1080 or email: *enquiries@cito.uk.com*

Low-cost airlines, such as easyJet, are seen as both a threat and an opportunity for coach tour operators

# Facing up to marketing challenges

**The changes and challenges for tourism marketing in the UK will be the focus of the Tourism Society's 2006 Annual Conference in Nottingham.**

**Professor Victor Middleton, the author of Sustainable Tourism – A Marketing Perspective, will chair the conference that is being held at the University of Nottingham on Friday, June 16.**

**Speakers will include Guy Parsons, chief operating officer at Travelodge, and the issues up for debate will range from hotel and destination branding to online, viral, and digital marketing.**

**A study tour of Sherwood Forest's Living Legend Project, a champagne reception and dinner at Nottingham's Colwick Hall will take place on the night before the conference.**

**David Curtis-Brignell, the chairman of the Tourism Society, said: "Whether you are an experienced marketeer, a consultant, academic or student, this conference will provide you with information invaluable to your tourism career. Delegates from all sectors of the tourism industry are welcome."**

**■ For more information, contact Lydia Harrison at the Tourism Society on 020 7488 2789.**

# Show goes back to Birmingham

International GROUP LEISURE & TRAVEL SHOW
28th & 29th September 2006
Hall 8, The NEC, Birmingham
www.leisureshow.com

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the International Group Leisure & Travel Show and it is celebrating by going back to its roots.

The market-leading travel and coach tourism exhibition, which is specifically dedicated to groups, held its first event at the National Motorcycle Museum near Birmingham in 1997 and now the two-day trade show, which was subsequently held mainly in London, is going back to its roots. The show will be held for the first time at the NEC in Birmingham on September 28 and 29.

The NEC will host The Group Leisure and Travel Show

YPL Exhibitions, the organisers, report that the Birmingham venue is certainly proving popular, with more than 70% of stands booked already.

"Stands are selling quickly as, quite simply, the NEC ticks all the boxes," explained exhibition sales manager, Sharon Dorgan.

"It is a quality modern venue centrally located in the country, allowing exhibitors to reach an increased number of visitors."

A further attraction is the free coach transfers to the show. "An important factor to consider when we decided to move the show was to make sure that it was easy to attend," organiser Emma Cash, stated.

"With this in mind, we have arranged various coach transfers from around the UK to the show, whereby visitors contact the coach operator to book a free place on the coach, subject to availability."

More information on the pick up points and contact numbers for the coach transfers will be announced shortly.

■ For more information, visit *www.leisureshow.com* or call 01908 613323.

# Have a capital Christmas

**Operators following the old Fred Pontin maxim of booking early should check out the Christmas in the Capital programme from LHTS.**

**The London specialist is offering a number of packages over the Christmas period. They all are based on three nights' accommodation in a four-star central London hotel and, depending on the option chosen, may include a cruise on the River Thames, a ride on the London Eye or a Boxing Day visit to the theatre to catch a matinee or evening performance of one of the big musicals.**

**One package that catches the eye costs only £116 per person and includes three nights' half-board accommodation in a four-star central London hotel, sharing a twin-bedded room, and lunch on Christmas Day.**

**■ For bookings and more information, call LHTS on 0207 233 5322 (fax 0207 233 5250).**

Full gallop: enjoy the action on a day out at Sandown Park

# Place your bets

Groups planning a trip to the races (see *Out+About*, *CBW*, April 12) should also check out the fixtures at Sandown Park. The track at Esher in Surrey stages top-class racing through the year and the next fixture is the Betfred Gold Cup Meeting on Friday and Saturday, April 28 and 29.

Sandown has three enclosures - the Premier, Grandstand and Course. There are plenty of bars and restaurants, including the Tingle Creek (book on 01372 464348).

Groups of six or more qualify for a 6% discount and the discount is raised to 20% for parties of 12 or more. Coach parking is free - access is from the Portsmouth road - and drivers receive a complimentary Grandstand ticket and a £5 food voucher.

■ For bookings and more information, contact Sandown racecourse on 01372 470047.

# Events

**■ April 22-23: UK Coach Rally, Brighton, 01753 631170**

**■ April 24-26: CPT Scotland Annual Conference, Gleneagles. Gail Hume 0131 272 2150, email: *gailhume@cpt-uk.freeserve.co.uk***

**■ April 25/27: CV Show, NEC, Birmingham. *www.cvshow.com***

**■ May 4: Employee Motivation and Incentives, conference, CBI Conference Centre, London. *www.symposium-events.co.uk***

**■ May 8-10: ALBUM Conference, Cardiff. Karen Stafford-Smith 029 2078 7700.**

**■ May 9-13: Motortec automotive show, IFEMA, Madrid, Spain. *www.motorteconline.com*, +34 91 722 3000**

**■ May 11: DDA 2005 and Public Transport: Myth and Reality, conference, Sadlers Wells, London. Book online at *www.thewaterfront.co.uk***

**■ May 17-18: Coach Tourism 2006, Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire. *www.coachtourism.com*, 0870 3892903**

**■ May 21-28: CPT Study Tour, Singapore/Kuala Lumpur. Details: 0207 240 3131**

**■ June 15: Unintended Accelerations Accidents Seminar, Whitehouse Hotel, Kegworth, Derbyshire. Reducing 'bus surge' incidents. Call 0115 937 6868, or email *dean.southall@btconnect.com***

**■ September 9-10: 40th Anniversary Bus Driver of the Year, Blackpool. 0161 427 5986. *www.bdoy.co.uk***

**■ September 28-29: Group Leisure and Travel Show, NEC, Birmingham. Call 01908 613323, or visit *www.leisureshow.com***

**■ November 6 -9: World Travel Market, ExCel, London. *www.wtmlondon.com***

by 'Grass Routes Coaches'

# An open letter to the Mayor of London

## Our mystery operator tells Ken Livingstone why he's got it wrong on coaches

Dear Ken,

Excuse the informality, but you and I go way back. In the days of your reign at the LCC and GLC I was your greatest fan. As I understood it, and I was much younger then, the plan was to make public transport cheap so people would travel on it.

I used buses and tubes at all hours of the day and night. It was a cheap, efficient, grimy service; it did the job for me. I never really minded the dirt; it would have been nicer clean - but not at any cost. As I recall, most journeys cost about the same as a Mars bar.

I got into the tube station the other day. I only wanted to go two stops: charge £3. Even with slightly cleaner trains and stations, I chose to walk. I bought a Mars bar and still had enough change for most of a triple skinny latte with caramel sauce.

After all these years, I received your letter and leaflet. That's the one signed by the London Low Emission Zone Team. Firstly let me say I received four copies, which in terms of the environment and the cost is a bit wasteful.

I cannot argue, to reduce pollution must be a good thing. I just wonder if shutting down my business is really going to achieve this. At present my fleet is upgraded each year, older coaches are replaced with new.

My customers would far rather travel on a new coach, if asked they would support the idea that vehicles with lower emissions were a good thing, but they will still travel with the company that offers the cheapest price.

Please remember that the vast majority of passengers using the buses, trains and tube into and through London have to be there. London is where they live or work. Passengers travelling by coach have a choice; they do not have to go to London. Provincial theatres are excellent, the UK is very well endowed with historic buildings, and shopping malls have sprung up all over the country. Zoos, museums and galleries are available across the land.

Your proposals, if introduced without funding support to operators, will result in our pricing structures encouraging the homegrown tourist out of London. Terrorism, health scares and even the strength of the pound frighten away incoming tourists.

Only a few months ago you were advertising that visitors travelling in by public transport would receive two for the price of one tickets to London's attractions. I did enquire at the time and was told that coaches do not count as public transport!

A mainstay of the south east's coach operators is the between-schools journey. The economics and sense of these visits lies in that the coach providing morning and afternoon home/school transport will also provide the school outing. Under your proposals this would result in the newest vehicles being used for school runs and the oldest for longer distance 'quality' private hire work. If my vehicle breaks down in London does this mean that I must have another new vehicle standing by, or shall I tell them just to walk 50 children around the City and get the tube?

Within schools the funding requirements, the risk analyses and the mass of paperwork have generated a dramatic drop in the number of visits undertaken. If these visits have to be priced such that they will fund not only a new vehicle, but also its replacement in two years time, they will stop altogether.

Is it the case that the heavy diesel-engined vehicle is the biggest cause of London's pollution? I know that one of my coaches produces more pollution than a car. How many cars does it take to produce the same level of pollution as my coach? If my coach is carrying 30-50 passengers and seemingly the cars are only carrying the driver - where is the cut-off point?

For the coaching industry, far more frightening than your proposals is the thought that, once introduced into London, other authorities will follow. At that stage the only way forward I can see is retirement - has anyone studied the exhaust gases from a compost heap?

Grass Routes is a coach operator who has asked us to keep their identity a secret.

**If there's a burning issue you want to get off your chest, write to Open Platform, CBW, 3 The Office Village, Cygnet Park, Hampton, Peterborough PE7 8FD or e-mail *cbwinbox@rouncymedia.co.uk***


**IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE...**

**Anatomy of a PI**

What *really* happens when you are called up before the traffic commissioner

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LETTER OF THE WEEK

**I'm sure you will have received more than enough mail from coach operators on the subject of Councillor Andy Sutton (Comment, *CBW*, April 12) without us tour operators getting in on the act. I thought you might like to read what I had to say to the esteemed councillor.**

Dear Mr. Sutton,

I would very much like to read an unabridged version of the comments reportedly made by yourself in a recent copy of 'Island Life'.

The sketchy 'snippets' quoted in our trade press are, one would hope, misrepresentative of your actual comments. We are currently left with the impression of a totally bigoted and un-researched point of view expressed by a person that has no conception of what makes tourism tick, how many people depend on it, and one totally ignorant of the industry, and dismissive of the people in it.

The comments are ill-informed, inaccurate and extremely offensive.

I have a relatively small holiday company, and admittedly only six coaches were on the island last year. After reading the comments in *CBW* I decided to analyse the 'spend' that we could realistically credit to those six coaches (hotels, pre-paid admissions, 'external' snacks etc.). The figure, which I am more than prepared to break down for you, came to £64,000! Not bad for a bunch of 'bucket & spaders', I'm sure you'll agree. A figure of £277 per person per visit, or £44.50 per person, per day whilst on the island.

Bear in mind this is the tip of the iceberg. Six coaches full of seniors, and let's say that there are around 100 coaches per week on the island, for a 30 week season. By my reckoning that would convert into approximately £32 million for the island's economy.

At first glance it would appear to me that you are not trying to 're-shape the battlefield', more like 'kill the goose that lays the golden egg'!

There is a reference to 'extending the season'. Admirable idea, but the island 'closes down' in mid October and re-opens for Easter! Subsidised ferry crossings and active encouragement to keep attractions open, could achieve that - but ask yourself 'who would want to come to the island after the autumn mid term break?' Other than seniors, no-one!

**AM Laver,**
Laver Holidays

**WIN A BUS! Sort of... Drop us a line and if your letter is chosen as our Letter of the Week, you'll receive a top-notch coach or bus model courtesy of our friends at Corgi. Please try to keep your letters under 200 words. The editor's decision is final.**

## The true cost...

Your article 'Fraser Eagle to run trains' (*CBW*, April 5) contained errors.

GNER offers a wide range of advance purchase and walk-up fares for travel between York and London King's Cross. A Standard Class open return costs £167 while a First Class open return ticket is priced at £260 - substantially less than the incorrect fares quoted in your article.

Passengers who can book in advance, up to 1800hrs on the day before travel, can benefit from further savings using our increasingly popular advance purchase tickets; return York to London prices for these start from £19 Standard Class or £59 First Class.

Our fares are competitive with all other modes of travel, including those proposed so far by Grand Central. Last year, more than a million passengers travelled with GNER on fares which, in real terms, were cheaper than under British Rail a decade ago.

**John Gelson**
GNER media relations manager

***CBW* says: The £307 and £187 fares quoted were for the Special Executive and Standard Business Special first and standard class fares respectively. These tickets include free (if available) car parking and Underground tickets. Details were obtained from the GNER web-site. We said that these were 'as much as' GNER charges. Neither an 'error' nor 'incorrect'. We do not dispute that GNER offer a wide range of fares... many with restrictions.**

## April 19 in history:

**1956** Prince Rainier III of Monaco marries film actress Grace Kelly in a religious ceremony at the Cathedral of Monaco

**1993** The Waco siege ends in an inferno, killing 77 members of the Branch Davidian cult, including founder David Koresh

**1995** 168 people are killed and more than 500 injured when Timothy McVeigh bombs a government building in Oklahoma City

**2005** Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger is elected as the Pope – the head of the world's 1.1 billion Roman Catholics.

# Swiss army

## Post Buses celebrate 100 years by conquering France

**Bill Godwin**

Serving a population of a little over seven million in an area roughly twice the size of Wales, the Post Bus system in Switzerland is marking its centenary by extending its sphere of influence to urban operations in France.

Three specially-constructed buses, each carrying 14 passengers, were launched, in June 1906, into service between Berne, the capital, and three small towns in the region to public disbelief and suspicion about the new-fangled form of transport - doubts which appeared justified only a short while later when failures and frequent breakdowns meant the welcome return of traditional horse-drawn coaches.

Mail coaches had long been a reliable form of communication throughout the country and, until 1848, were the responsibiliy of individual cantons. They reached many remote communities, with some routes making often perilous crossings of mountain passes such as the Simplon and St Gotthard.

The unfavourable reception to the first motor buses, supplied by Berna, Saurer and Martini (a builder which remained in business until 1934), did not however deter the pioneers of motor transport from pushing ahead with their plans.

There were many obstacles including the total prohibition of motorised transport from all roads in the Grisons, in the east of Switzerland, until 1919. This measure was reported in some cases to have led prosperous tourists to harnessing horses to their 'automobiles' to enable them to continue their travels.

After the First World War, in which the Swiss had zealously guarded their neutraiilty, the military handed over a number of trucks to the postal authorities (PTT) which arranged to have them bodied for mail and passenger-carrying duties. This speeded up the replacement of horse-drawn transport and to allow motor buses to penetrate into some of the many remote valleys which had not had public transport links before.

By then the Swiss commercial vehicle industry, identified by such famous names as Saurer, Berna and, later, FBW, had produced some innovative engineering which allowed it to participate actively in the road transport plans of the postal administration. It was also in that euphoric inter-war period that tourism became an important contributor to the

One of the Post Bus fleet in typically srtiking Swiss Alp scenery

country's economy, reflected in many parts of the country by the integration of postal services with the extensive rail network to allow a route coverage - and ticketing - which was almost unique in Europe.

Today there are few lines of the Swiss Federal Raiways on which intermediate stations are not served by at least one route run by post buses (or independent regional operators). It is, in fact, one of the genuine delights for travellers in Switzerland to witness the meticulous adherence to the timekeeping of the buses connecting with trains.

To augment services over the current network of over 10,000km of routes there are a number of routes specially tailored to enhance the leisure experience in scenic regions, such as the famous 'Palm Express' which runs daily between St Moritz and Lugano.

International routes, in co-operation with other operators, are also serviced to and from Austria, Italy and Germany while the recent successful tender by the Swiss for contracts to operate some small town services in France represents a fascinating breakthrough for a non-EU country in a highly competitive sector.

The first French town to gain a Swiss-managed bus service was Dole (Franche Comte) and this included provision of a free shuttle route. The most recent success came with the award of services in Bourg-en-Bresse (Rhone-Alpes region) where 30 buses now cover a route system of 120km. Other 'offshore' operations are run in Obernai and in Hagenau, near Strasbourg.

A long-standing feature of the Swiss Post Bus operation is the allocation of routes in some regions to contract operations with vehicles indistiguishable from the yellow core fleet. This has considerable economic advantages as it allows servics to be run with more cost-effective utilisation of drivers, maintenance staff, etc, while the timetable and fares structure is laid down by the PostAuto organisation.

With one of the main criteria for many routes being linked to the need to maintain letter and parcels services in rural districts, use is frequently made of small trailers to top up the capacity of the mail compartment integrated in the bus bodywork.

Passenger trailers were first tried in 1921 with Italian-built Arrato units - converted to pneumatic tyres two years later. Other types followed, including some curious double-ended trailers, but it was not until traffic growth in the early 1970s that Swiss post office road services turned to articulated buses when Saurer-built 131-passenger underfloor-engined vehicles gave the fleet a new look.

With the exception of two batches of Italian Alfa Romeo buses in 1947/8, Swiss specialists prided themselves in the quality and performance of the vehicles built to the exacting specification of the operator.

Incidentally, the Italian vehicles were the first to feature a forward control configuration, although it was not until the first domestically produced FBW prototype 'car alpins' FC model of 1954 began replacing the classic bonneted models of the postal fleet, a process not completed until the mid-1980s.

Long before then, Mercedes-Benz had begun making inroads into the traditional Swiss vehicle parc which, by then, had also scrapped its requirement for a right-hand-drive configuration preferred in mountain operations. When a Swiss postbus, of the type popularly designated 'Haifisch' because of the shark tooth frontal design of the body, visited England in 1956 it was probably the first vehicle from the continent to feature right-hand steering.

With the demise of Saurer and FBW and the subsequent, relatively short-lived, continuity of local bus production under the NAW badge (a Mercedes-Benz venture) the floodgates opened to other European importers.

**"100 million passengers are now carried annually by the PostAuto fleet"**

Switzerland has minted a 20 franc coin to mark the centenary

## German makers now dominant

**With very few exceptions in the first 70 years of motor bus operation by the Swiss Post Office, the government agency collaborated almost exclusively with the country's domestic vehicle industry in the build and operation of its fleet replacements. This state of affairs continued until Saurer and FBW ceased production in the '80s after acquisition by Mercedes-Benz. Subseqently, the formation of a new company, NAW, allowed a small contribution to continue in the supply of the famous yellow buses.**

**The latest fleet list – January 2006 – still shows some 108 NAW vehicles in use although the number of classic Saurer buses has diminished to 18.**

**Of the total fleet strength of 2004 buses and coaches over a quarter is now accounted for by Mercedes-Benz (586) with Kässbohrer-Setra in second place with a total of 311. Volvo is gaining ground with 242 buses now in regular use. MAN shows impressive penetration of this fleet with 233 vehicles (including the allocation of CNG-fuelled buses for use in the principality of Liechtenstein). Neoplan (now part of NeoMAN) continues to be shown separately with a total of 214 vehicles, with a small number of double-deck buses acquired for commuter services.**

**Fleet statistics show no fewer than 31 makers among which many other famous names such as Renault (106), Van Hool (15) and Bova-VDL (12) are also represented. Latest addition to the fleet are two Polish-built Solaris buses while Temsa (Turkey) is also testing the water. For the 'international' operation in France Heuliez and Irisbus are in use in addition to a number of minibuses.**

EAST LANCS ESTEEM

# High Esteem

## First product of East Lancs' new in-house design team is only the beginning, says Blackburn coachbuilder

**Martin Cole, technical editor**

The launch of the East Lancs Esteem sees the dawn of a new era at the Blackburn coachbuilding company.

The recent introduction of 3D CAD design and modelling software, implementation of 'lean manufacturing' principles and an in-house design team have sparked significant change and pre-empted a restructuring of the company which is now a subsidiary of British Citybus.

British Citybus has been formed as a holding company and East Lancashire Coachbuilders will now be known purely as East Lancs. The former East Lancs repair and refurbishment subsidiary S&T, acquired in 1999, now becomes a direct subsidiary of British Citybus, and East Lancs Overseas has been created to handle all export business.

Lean manufacturing, a widely adopted principle pioneered by Toyota, has been introduced with the aid of recently-appointed production manager Tony Ward. Staff have been trained in new disciplines and the result is an increase in production which will see output rise to around 300 vehicles this year – with the same 350 staff.

The single-deck Esteem will be available on a range of chassis and in all popular lengths from 8.9 up to 12.8m. Measuring 2.5m wide and 2.9m high it offers a modern, spacious feel with a stylish interior developed to compete with the best of the rest.

Although these moves are a major step forward for East Lancs and put its capabilities much more in line with the likes of ADL, Wrightbus and Plaxton, the company is also very keen to stress it is not about to enter a phase of direct head-to-head competition. But the Esteem is definitely aimed at being a product which is attractive to the big groups. ›

Above: Above: the face of progress – a market contender from East Lancs.
Below: Scania's Euro IV five-cylinder EGR engine

Wide entrance features a boarding ramp and non-slip flooring has inset Scania and East Lancs motifs

# New Esteem

The 10.6m Esteem presented at the launch was based on Scania's Euro IV N230 chassis featuring a five-cylinder EGR engine – essentially a Euro IV version of the OmniTown chassis – and it will shortly enter a busy demonstration programme with operators around the country.

It's new frontal styling incorporates a large curved windscreen, small-diameter inset headlamps which swing out for easy adjustment or bulb replacement, and separate lower corner mouldings for quick and simple repairs to minor frontal accidents.

The body frame continues the East Lancs tradition of using Alusuisse bolted aluminium sections for light weight and high strength alongside ease of repair and side panels are aluminium sheet with multi-section GRP lower skirts.

Bonded glazing is employed for the saloon windows and operators can also choose between gasket-glazed toughened glass units or double glazed panels if full air conditioning is specified.

The attractive exterior of the Esteem is surpassed by its highly pleasing interior which is airy and spacious – emphasised by the use of cantilevered MTB Punt 5 semi-high backed seats which enable easy floor cleaning and a generous gangway. Seating can be specified with three-point lap and diagonal seat belts or two-point lap belts. Trimmed in a blue/grey moquette with silvery ABS backs, the seats harmonised very well with the blue mouldings and the pale blue non-slip floor covering which was enhanced with both East Lancs and Scania motifs ›

Above: generous driver area with neat control layout. Left: steering wheel-mounted controls. Below: new style handbrake lever

Sales director John Horn said: "We realise the groups are responsible for about 80% of bus purchases and it follows we should be seeking to put 80% of our output their way.

"But the last thing we want to do is lose touch with the flexibility East Lancs has always shown its customers by being able to deliver bespoke products for varied applications.

"We do a lot of one-offs as broadcast vehicles, mobile libraries and community projects, plus our open-top double deckers.

"We have built strong relationships with many of our customers as a result - and we are getting our aftercare and warranty support services in far better shape. As a great many of our vehicles are located in the south of the country we have agreements with Caetano at Waterlooville and with London Truck and Bus at Northfleet - both of which are fully capable of effecting local repairs.

"Our own support team consists of engineers in well-stocked vehicles who will repair vehicles on site but are prepared to work with the operator. If they say the bus is coming in at 1700hrs, that's when they will be there to start work."

**Ten years ago we lost in the region of £1 million. This year we've made £500,000**

East Lancs dates back to 1934 and underwent a succession of owners until it rested with former Drawlane and British Bus chief Dawson Williams. Last year the management team of chairman David Powell, managing director Mike Kilroy and John Horn put together a management buyout package which gave them 50% of the company.

The result was the introduction of new shift patterns and six-hour build slots which generated higher efficiency and began to turn the company around.

Mike Kilroy said: "Ten years ago the company lost in the region of a million pounds, but since then we've increased turnover by 60% and this year we've made around £500,000 profit after tax.

"It's been hard work getting there and meant a lot of pulling together but we've met all the targets we set in our five-year business plan and can be rightly proud of where we stand today."

**Above: tip-up seats in the wheelchair and buggy bays boost overall seating capacity . Right and far right: spacious and stylish interior developed by Invertec. Below: CCTV monitor sits neatly in an overhead moulding in the cab**

**in the entrance area.**

**There are no seats moulded into the nearside front wheel arch but there are two rearward facing seats set into the offside moulding. A flat surface appears on top of the offside moulding and a railed luggage pen above the nearside unit – which also houses the backrest for any wheelchair passenger, a drop-down rail for security and a used ticket disposal box.**

**Both the wheelchair bay and buggy bay opposite have tip-up seating positioned against the sidewalls.**

**The floor slopes gently upwards from the rear axle towards the back panel and removable traps are set into the flooring to allow access to the top of the axle and other driveline components.**

**Just two seats are available on the back row on the Scania chassis as the vertical engine layout demands the whole of the rear offside in what is popularly termed a 'wardrobe' arrangement. This compartment is covered in an ABS moulding with a smooth texture, identical to the front dash, roof panelling and driver compartment.**

**Roof panel mouldings incorporate ducting for saloon heating distribution or air conditioning and the lighting panels are inset to lie flush with the surface. Each panel is hinged to allow the unit to swing down for easy tube replacement. Loudspeakers and cctv cameras can also be inset into the roof panels.**

**Two-door London specification Esteems are being made available and these will have the option of plug-type doors if operators prefer.**

**The driver's compartment is one of the most spacious on the market with plenty of room behind the driver for personal effects and sensibly placed coat hooks. Scania's latest instrument console is clear, compact and uncomplicated with secondary switch banks and the new-style handbrake lever mounted in the panel just below the driver's side window.**

**Extensive glass areas give the driver a sweeping view and good sight of the side mirrors. There is also a centrally mounted mirror for quick checks of the saloon or gangway areas and in**

Used Tickets

N230
EURO
"Demand to be noticed"

Used Tickets

Eas

East Lancs
ESTEEM
SCANIA
ESTEEM

# THE CBW COLLECTION No3

## EAST LANCS ESTEEM

**LENGTH** 10.6 metres
**WIDTH** 2.5 metres
**HEIGHT** 2.9 metres

**CHASSIS** Scania N230
**ENGINE** Euro IV (EGR) 9-litre five-cylinder, 230bhp/1050Nm
**GEARBOX** ZF five-speed auto, integrated retarder
**BODY CONSTRUCTION** On Alusuisse bolted aluminium spaceframe. Side panels aluminium. Lower skirts GRP
**PASSENGER DOOR** Two-leaf inswing. Others available
**INTERIOR** Invertec developed. ABS mouldings around major areas. Ducting for air conditioning built into roof lighting panels. Hopper-top windows lock automatically when air conditioning is on
**SEATING MTB** Punt 5 semi-high-backed. Seatbelts optional. Tip-up seats to buggy/wheelchair area
**DRIVER AREA** CCTV with reversing camera. Side opening window. Coat hooks. Optional assault screen

**CONTACT:** 01254 504150

East Lancs
ESTEEM

the overhead mouldings is a binnacle housing the CCTV monitor. This provides views of the road ahead, behind, alternate sides. The entrance area and the saloon – all in rotation. It can also be used as a reversing aid as the rear view is automatically selected when reverse gear is engaged.

A full assault screen can be fitted for additional driver protection.

A feature of the Esteem is that it retains hopper-top windows even in its double-glazed, air conditioned guise. This is to allow passenger to open windows to improve air circulation should the air conditioning fail. When the air conditioning is functional the windows are electronically locked to prevent chilled air from being wasted.

Left: wheelarch moulding carries two inset seats on the offside. Right: the team bent on success - from left, Mike Kilroy, MD, David Powell, chairman, John Horn, sales director, and Mick Ward, production manager.

Heating or conditioned air is distributed via ducting in the cove panels

## Deliveries

A number of orders for Esteems will be ready for delivery shortly. Seven very similar to the demonstrator are going to Metrobus. Courtney Coaches are taking two 12.8m versions on Enviro 300 chassis and the first Volvo Euro IV model is earmarked for Delaine of Bourne, the small Lincolnshire independent.

A number of Scania-based vehicles currently being delivered to Metrobus are fitted with Esteem fronts and the cantilever rear boot flap. Having seen the Esteem in development, the company insisted on its new buses being fitted with the latest styling – a move which is bound to confuse the local enthusiasts and the spotter fraternity.

# Golden years

## Andrew Jarosz meets Brighton rally legends as Bibby's celebrates 50 years in coaching

It was April 1975. Rain swept over the Middle Walk in Blackpool, and I had just received the 'Navigator of the Year award' – or was it runner up? – I can't remember now – but I had a cup, and a photograph – or was it the Plaxton cup? 31 years on, I'm not really sure, but John Fisher was pleased, and so was driver John Pollitt.

Whatever was the case, the National Travel Leopard GJD 199N went down to Brighton in the next week, and I didn't – that was the end of my 15 minutes of fame!

But the talk of the whole Blackpool Rally, coming as it did, a week before the 'big one' at Brighton (Blackpool may have lost its Coach Rally, but it subsequently gained the Pepsi Big One), was of the two young lads from Bibby's, who were going to show the world how good Northern drivers were. Twenty-two year old Peter Bibby, and his navigator Malcolm Stephenson, were poised to enlighten us about what doing driving tests was all about. Peter was the son of Fred Bibby from Ingleton, Malcolm was his mate, although not yet working for the company, but together they were about to demonstrate to the UK coach industry, just what the younger generation could do for it.

Today, Peter is 53, Malcolm a year older. Both are directors of the family firm, with Peter, now managing director, leading the coach company into its 50th anniversary. Alongside him, Malcolm (the unsung hero) makes sure that engineering is as good as it could ever be!

Behind them, a string of successes and awards at both the Blackpool and Brighton coach rallies. In front of them the continuation of a highly successful business, which not only washes its face, but has stayed ahead of the game and has adapted and changed as the whole UK coaching business has developed in the last 30 years.

Both of them are now dads, and therefore sensible people. This is not the time to enjoy senseless hours down the pub. There is a business to run, families to support, money to be made. Not much time to indulge in passions, although Peter admits to following Liverpool FC, and indulging in rock music (being a child of the 60s and all that).

But the business has grown, and the family roots have been carried through to the present day. Peter, Malcolm, and Peter's sister Sheila Holcroft are the directors of Bibbys of Ingleton. Peter's son Christopher and daughter Claire, are working in the business, as is Malcolm's daughter Kath. Both lads married sisters, so the company staff have become blood-related.

For those who don't know, Ingleton is a small village in the top left hand corner of North Yorkshire, next to the A65 Skipton to Kendal road, on the edge of the Yorkshire Dales National Park. With a population of less than 2,000, it's hardly good bus and coach country, but whereas in the

The Bibby's team (looking slightly younger) celebrate success at Blackpool

'Vast chunks of chrome, air horns and distinctive coach lining on immaculate coaches'

Peter Bibby

Malcolm Stephenson

1980s there were three operators with 25 coaches in nearby Settle, there are none there now, and the Bibby fleet has grown from eight coaches to 24 in that time.

The Bibby family has lived and traded in the same community for over 100 years. As fruiterers, they were the first people in the area to have a car (actually a delivery truck), in the early 20th century, and Peter's grandfather Clem started a milk haulage business in 1945. Coach operation started in September 1956, when Clem purchased a Leyland Comet with Santus bodywork. Clem died in 1962, his son Fred took the five-coach business over and within three years the last milk wagons had gone. By 1971, the company had bought its first new coach - a Ford R192 with Duple Viceroy bodywork, and by the early eighties the fleet consisted of seven Fords, four minibuses and the Bedford OB, which still operates special events and private hires.

Taking part in coach rallies started in Blackpool in 1971 with the new Ford, but the first trophy took two years to come. Since then, the cluster of trophies grew, and every year since 1975, there was at least one coach in the driving test finals at Blackpool. Trademarks of the time were the vast chunks of chrome, air horns and distinctive coach lining on immaculate coaches. The chrome has long gone, wheel covers have gone with wheel nuts now painted a distinctive white, lining out is a lot more restrained in the 21st century livery, but you can still spot the air horns!

The 'dynamic duo' of Peter Bibby and Malcolm Stephenson developed a consistent partnership during the 1970s, regularly competing against each other for driver of the year, although it's now 12 years since Peter won the top honour. Coaches are still entered in the Brighton Rally every year, although this week's entries are more likely to be driven by today's young generation, rather than the old timers.

Peter's father Fred passed away quite suddenly in 1983, barely 53 years old, but he had taught Peter everything he needed to know. As a toddler, he started riding pillion with his father on the milk trucks, and developed his following of Liverpool FC, probably because the dairymen of Liverpool kept football programmes for him.

Not being able to drive until he was 21, but having left school at 15 with no formal qualifications, Peter spent every waking moment on the coaches and learnt how to operate the business from his father. ›

The milk fleet – started by Peter Bibby's grandfather in 1945

Bibby's had the first car in Bentham

## COMPANY HISTORY

**1945** Clem Bibby starts haulage company which transports milk from farms to dairies
**1956** First coach is purchased for a school contract
**1962** Clem Bibby dies and son Fred Bibby takes over business
**1965** Last of trucks sold, Bibbys becomes 100% coach operator
**1971** First new coach – Ford R192 purchased.
**1971** First Blackpool Rally entered
**1977** Peter Bibby wins first 'Driver of the year' trophy at Brighton rally
**1983** Fred Bibby dies, Peter Bibby takes over
**1988** First rear engined DAF coach purchased
**1991** New coach depot on A65 built

Van Hool bodied DAF poses for photo in Austria. Purchased new in 2004, it features air conditioning, toilet, seat belts, audio cassette system and the air horns.

He cites Gordon Dingle at West Yorkshire Road Car as a great inspiration. Bibby's would turn out its whole fleet on summer Saturdays as well as some Friday nights and Sundays to operate Road Car's coastal express services from Leeds or Bradford. "Even without a mobile phone, the man was lethal," said Peter. "He knew where every single coach was, where extra coaches were needed, and you could turn up for a Brid, and find you were going to Coventry. That's where I learnt that doing what you are told and not moaning, meant you consistently got the best jobs."

The early business mix of school contracts and private hires continues to the present day, but of course the nature of the business has changed considerably. Bibby's has never undertaken bus work, although one school contract is licensed as a local service. Prior to deregulation, the company held licences for over 80 destinations, and day excursions went well. After deregulation, the company expanded its pick up points, although excursions were dying and short breaks were coming in. Today at least four or five coaches are operated on Bibby's own tour programme with over 100 departures advertised in its comprehensive 64-page brochure. The pick up area now covers South Lakeland, North Lancashire, North Yorkshire west of Harrogate, and parts of West Yorkshire west of Bradford. "You have to come up with new ideas all the time," says Peter. "Otherwise, your business will fall."

The priciest progressive tour this year is advertised as "not for the faint-hearted" and involves 13 days in Norway, with seven hotels, ferries and a destination within the Arctic Circle for £989. Other European countries covered by coach tours include Ireland, France, Austria, Italy, Germany, Spain, Hungary, Slovenia and Belgium. Air holidays now figure more than before, with eight departures to Iceland, Madeira, Jersey and Prague. Weekend breaks are also popular with nearly 20 three-day tours on offer. The company does all its own bookings without using travel agents or other intermediaries who take off commission. A website is under construction and should be up and running this year to provide more advertising for the tours and other services that are offered.

Under Peter's control the fleet policy moved on from Fords to Bedfords and Leyland Tigers, eventually majoring in on the DAF chassis, which underpins the whole full-size fleet. Bibby's had never owned a rear-engined coach until 1988, when it bought its first SB3000, but the benefits of better luggage space and easier maintenance meant that no more new mid-engined coaches were ever bought. Van Hool is the preferred bodybuilder, which Peter describes as "practical, not specially glitzy inside, but still worth

**COACH RALLY DRIVING PRIZES**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1977 Brighton | Driver of the year | Peter Bibby |
| 1978 Brighton | Driver of the year | Peter Bibby |
| 1979 Blackpool | Driver of the year | Malcolm Stephenson |
| | Runner up | Peter Bibby |
| 1980 Blackpool | Driver of the year | Peter Bibby |
| | Runner up | Malcolm Stephenson |
| 1980 Brighton | Driver of the year | Peter Bibby |
| 1981 Blackpool | Driver of the year | Malcolm Stephenson |
| | Runner up | Peter Bibby |
| 1986 Brighton | Driver of the year | Malcolm Stephenson |
| 1988 Brighton | Driver of the year | Malcolm Stephenson |
| 1993 Brighton | Driver of the year | Peter Bibby |

## FLEET LIST

| | |
|---|---|
| 1996 DAF / Plaxton | 49 seats |
| 1996 DAF / Plaxton | 53 seats |
| 1996 DAF / Ikarus | 55 seats |
| 1997 DAF / Ikarus | 53 seats |
| 1997 DAF / Ikarus | 55 seats (2) |
| 1998 DAF / Ikarus | 55 seats |
| 1998 DAF / Van Hool | 49 seats |
| 1999 DAF / Plaxton | 49 seats |
| 2001 DAF / Van Hool | 49 seats (2) |
| 2001 DAF / Ikarus | 53 seats |
| 2003 DAF / Van Hool | 48 seats |
| 2004 DAF / Van Hool | 48 seats |
| 2004 DAF / Van Hool | 49 seats |
| 2005 DAF / Temsa | 53 seats |
| 2005 DAF / Van Hool | 49 seats |
| 1950 Bedford OB / Duple | 29 seats |
| 1999 Mercedes Benz | 24 seats |
| 2002 Sitcar / Beluga | 33 seats |
| 2003 Mercedes Benz | 16 seats |
| 2004 Mercedes Benz / Plaxton | 33 seats |
| 2006 Mercedes Benz | 16 seats |
| 2006 Mercedes Benz | 24 seats |
| 2003 DAF 85 series bulk tippers | (2) |

**TOTALS**

| | |
|---|---|
| Full size coaches | 17 |
| Mini + midi coaches | 7 |
| Wagons | 2 |

■ All coaches apart from Bedford are fitted with seatbelts ■ All full size coaches have reclining seats ■ 11 full size coaches and one minicoach are air conditioned ■ 10 full size coaches were purchased new ■ 8 full size coaches are fitted with toilet

**"Coaching is not rocket science, you know your costs and you charge for your work accordingly"**

From left: Kath Stephenson, Claire Mottram, Peter Bibby (rear), Barbara Close and Sheila Holcroft (director)

something in a few years." He said that he was not a fan of new coaches (even though he's bought plenty in his time), because of the niggly things that tend to go wrong. "Anyone can go out and buy a new coach, that's easy, but it's the most unreliable thing there is. It's how it looks after three years that really matters," he said, knowing full well, that most of his fleet is in mint condition and most ages are disguised by the 18 BIB cherished plates he owns. Two DAF 85 series bulk tippers are also owned and deliver animal feed in the surrounding area.

This year's purchases have been two new Mercedes minicoaches, bought to beat the digital tachograph, and a low-mileage Van Hool DAF, against which he traded in his Ovi coach. I mentioned the six Ikarus DAFs in his fleet, three of which came from London Coaches, and Peter said that they had earned their corn, and were well worth the money. Bibby's bought the first new Turkish-built Temsa coach last year, which Peter describes as a replacement for the Ikarus which is no longer being built. "Yes, it costs less, and you get what you pay for," he said.

Prior to 1991, the fleet nestled on council-owned land near the centre of the village, where space was at a premium. During the Gulf War, a large piece of land next to the A65 was purchased and the office and workshop built. "In those days we would have worked for anyone to get the depot paid off," said Peter. "But now we don't work for anyone special."

Nevertheless, the company does get a lot of repeat business and does a lot of schools private hire all year round. "We are pretty well placed with Manchester one and a half hours away, Liverpool less than two, Newcastle two and a half, and Glasgow three hours away," he said. The company operates 16 school contracts every day, and also does some work for Galloways of Suffolk, and a little for David Urquhart. The simpler contracted tours are used to train tour drivers, and if they're liked they go on to Bibby's own work. Some work is also done for newspaper promotions like London Weekends and Omega Holidays, but rail replacement work seems to be a staple diet at the moment. Bibby's work for both Fraser Eagle and First on rail jobs, and Peter says that although payment tends to take 90 days or so, you find out what the work is worth and make a commercial decision. "Coaching is not rocket science, it's a very simple business - you know your costs and you charge for your work accordingly," he said.

The company 'fell into the work' with the Manchester Victoria replacements in the late 90s where six coaches worked every day, and that was followed by the Leeds City reconstruction. Currently, three coaches are working on the Settle-Carlisle replacement service, and 14 weeks of the Grange-over-Sands to Barrow is coming up. West Coast Main Line work is fairly regular as well, so if your costs are right you go for it. "These are opportunities," he said. "And you don't have to do it."

Right now, the company employs around 40 staff, and the rail work is good for driver retention. As with every family firm, office staff go out on school contracts and Peter is driving the new Vario coach with the distinctive Liverpool FC registration. Malcolm stays behind in the workshop, and is the spare driver. A commemorative dinner is planned for later this month to celebrate the 50th anniversary, although the true anniversary does not come up until September. Meanwhile the company is preparing for the UK Coach Rally. Last year Peter picked up the Directors Award, so he's not past it yet.

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# Tougher road laws in store

## New Road Safety Bill could lead to more public inquiries

**Miles Dorrington**

The government's new Road Safety Bill, which has just had its second reading, makes some significant changes to the law for both operators and drivers. Some of the measures will be welcomed by the industry but some will almost certainly lead to more public inquiries being called and more drivers being disqualified or having their PCV entitlement suspended.

Some of the major changes that will soon be law include:

### Speeding

At present, any driver caught speeding will have three to six penalty points imposed on their driving licence. Under the new law this will change to two to six penalty points. The change is to ensure that drivers who are caught speeding when they are only marginally over the speed limit can be dealt with in a way that is fairer and less likely to cause the offender to be disqualified under the 'totting up' procedure if they already have nine penalty points on their driving licence.

At the moment if those drivers are caught speeding again, even if they were only slightly over the limit, they will receive at least three penalty points. That will make them a 'totter' because the extra three penalty points will mean they then have 12 points on their licence. Drivers who become 'totters' are disqualified from driving for at least six months.

The new law will allow drivers with nine points on their licence to avoid becoming a 'totter' if only two penalty points are imposed and in certain circumstances motorists will receive no penalty points for an offence if they successfully attend a speed awareness course.

### Mobile phones

Currently drivers using a hand-held phone while driving will generally receive a fixed financial penalty and will not have their licence endorsed with penalty points. However, the Courts have frequently made it clear that professional drivers caught while driving a coach or bus will normally face disqualification.

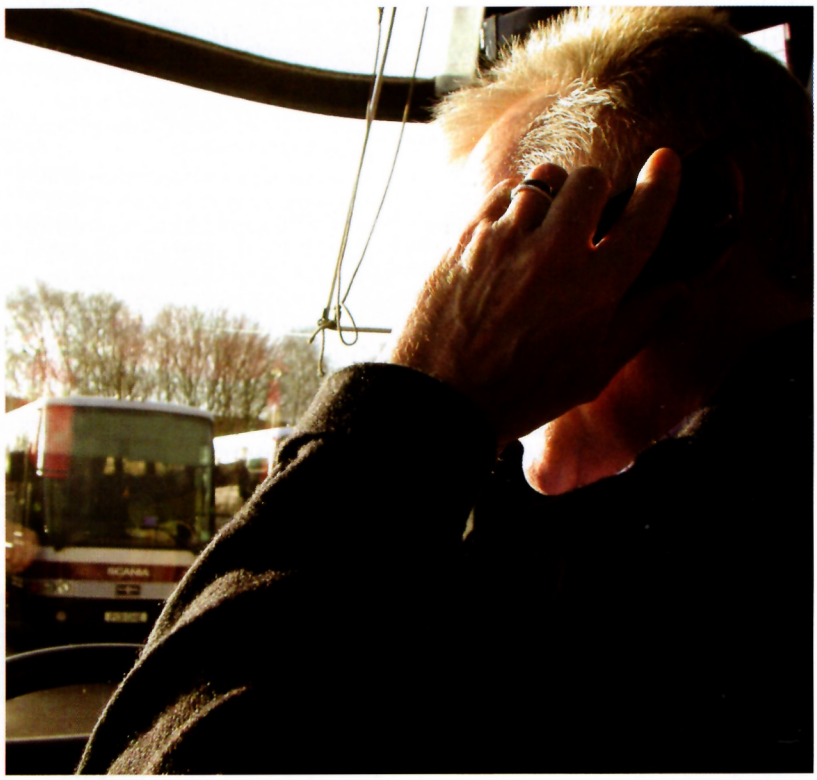
The penalty that the courts can impose will soon be increased to a fine of up to £2,500 for bus and coach drivers, discretionary disqualification from driving and the mandatory imposition of three penalty points on their driving licence.

It is anticipated that as the courts will be regarding the new offence as a more serious offence, the traffic commissioners will also take a tougher stance and drivers who manage to escape disqualification in the courts could find their PCV entitlement suspended or revoked by the traffic commissioner.

### Penalties from VOSA

The new law gives VOSA the power to impose roadside fixed penalty notices for breaches of the law. These can be offered in circumstances that would normally lead to a prosecution but only if the offender would not be at risk of disqualification had they been convicted in court. For example, driver's hours offences or overloading.

While fixed penalty notices may be seen as a more favourable option to prosecution and subsequent court appearances, it will often tempt drivers and operators to accept the penalty at the roadside without taking legal advice as to whether an offence had actually been committed. Bond Pearce often represents drivers and operators charged with offences that are either dropped or that result in an acquittal at court. Had the driver, or operator, in those cases been offered a fixed penalty notice it is likely it would have been accepted even though no offence had been committed.



The risk to operators and drivers of accepting fixed penalty notices in such circumstances is that the new legislation makes it clear that a fixed penalty notice will be considered "as if it were a relevant conviction". As a result the traffic commissioner will deal with them in the same way as if the matter had been dealt with by a court.

Bond Pearce advises operators and drivers to think very carefully about how they will deal with any offer of a fixed penalty notice. If in doubt, drivers should call back to base to take advice from the transport manager and if there is still any doubt the fixed penalty notice should not be accepted and legal advice should be sought.

### Vehicle condition

Drivers caught using a vehicle in a dangerous condition for the second time in a three year period will face obligatory disqualification from driving. To try and avoid this happening all first use inspections must be thorough, particularly to braking systems and wheel nuts, and all periodic maintenance inspections must be properly undertaken.

**Miles Dorrington is an associate with the transport team of Bond Pearce LLP. He can be contacted on 0117 989 6722 or by e-mail *miles.dorrington@bondpearce.com***

## TACHODISC OFFERS COMPLETE DIGITAL SOLUTION

Warrington-based Tachodisc will unveil its latest digital tachograph package at the CV Show – it is claimed to offer a complete range of solutions for the impending digital implementation.

Director of Tachodisc, Karen Crispe said: "We've been planning hard for the last few years to make sure that we can offer our customers everything they need for the digital tachograph, in addition to the full range of analogue products which we're already renowned for."

In addition to the new Clockwatcher digital analysis software, which was launched late last year, Tachodisc will be showcasing their bespoke Smartanalysis bureau service which offers analysis of analogue, digital and mixed operations.

Also on show from Tachodisc will be its range of digital downloading devices, including: SmartReader which combines an analogue tachograph chart reader with a smart card reader for use with drivers' hours software; CardReader which downloads binary information from drivers' smart cards; and Digidown device which allows data to be downloaded from multiple digital vehicle units, as well as data from drivers' smart cards. Digidown has been developed to incorporate space for a standard memory card, which finally provides a solution for companies with multiple locations to collate data at a central point for analysis.

Tachodisc has also developed a complete training offer for its customers; from bespoke on-site courses to open off-site training, covering drivers' hours law and tachograph regulations, chart analysis training, road transport directive courses, and a certificate in professional competence.

A new service is a training option for busy transport professionals. In a joint venture with Driver Hire, Tachodisc has targeted the implementation of digital technology with an operator and drivers' training pack. It contains a full training manual, guides, DVD demonstration, PowerPoint presentation and tutor notes to allow fleet managers and logistics professionals to carry out their own training on site.

"This is a much needed solution for the transport industry," Crispe said. "Even if every training provider in the UK worked at full capacity for seven days a week there is no way that they would be able to get through all of the drivers in the UK in time for digital implementation. In fact many operators have renewed their fleet with analogue vehicles to delay their involvement with digital, or else only have a handful of vehicles. Even if they could spare the time and afford to send all of their drivers on a course, those who won't

**Tachodisc's website features an online catalogue of tacho accessories**

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use the skills learnt will quickly forget and will need to be trained again when they do get a vehicle fitted with a digital tachograph.

"With our new training packs we're effectively giving control back to operators; they can train their drivers as and when they need to, and the drivers have a useful manual which explains everything from how to use their smart cards to the digital vehicle unit itself. Also included is a pictogram guide which can fit into a pocket and is plastic coated for longevity, and a driver pocket guide which simply details a quick summary of how to use the digital tachograph."

Tachodisc also claims to be one of the few companies in the UK to supply fully EU approved digital thermal printer paper which can resist the effect of even harsh chemicals such as diesel and oil.

■ *www.tachodisc.co.uk*
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## UNITEC GOES ONLINE FOR EFFICIENCY

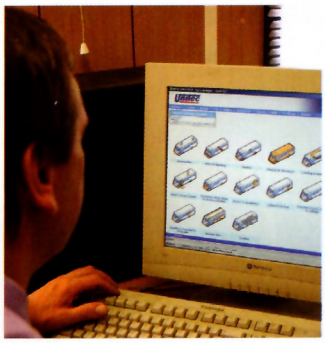
**Optare Group has created an efficient online aftermarket service to meet the needs of its specialist Unitec division.**

**Aftermarket director Paul Shepherd said: "The online service is aimed at improving business processes while increasing service to end users."**

**Developed by Epitomy Solutions, a Sheffield-based software developer specialising in aftermarket services, thie new online facility is said to provide key efficiency and effectiveness enhancements for Optare.**

**"The service allows us to directly import CAD data avoiding costly data re-entry and reducing potential error," explained Shepherd.**

**"Additionally it comes with superb dynamic 3D visualisation capability which, combined with a compression technology, allows easy CAD file transfer and sharing.**



Unitec's new online aftermarket service

**"This 3D visualisation and compression capability has been delivered by Epitomy's Japanese partner Lattice Technology, and converts 3D CAD data into an XML format allowing the data to be compressed with the minimum loss of quality but with maximum Internet transfer capability.**

**Epitomy's Andrew Vernon says the system saves time for all parties: "Web-based applications offer significant efficiency gains including multiple user access to a common aftermarket database.**

**"Also it provides systems interoperability with Optare's ERP – allowing end users to instantly ascertain stock availability."**

**The system met Optare's needs by combining original equipment with all-makes data to support both the Tempo and Solo models.**

**Shepherd added: "The ROI is driven by both efficiency improvements and the removal of ambiguity and error. The 'My Vehicle' advanced search function provides a parts specification for each individual vehicle with just one click providing a huge reduction in order error potential.**

**"The service creates a bespoke Unitec branded relationship and experience for each individual user. Customer feedback has been very positive. The initiative fits perfectly with Optare's 'one stop shop' approach to design, production and the aftermarket."**

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Bus & Coach Sales

## FACT FILE

**Chassis/ Body** Volvo B10M, Plaxton Premiere 350
**First registered** March 12, 1996
**Owner** Woods of Leicester, Since April 16, 2004
**Major modifications** Up-seated to 53, toilet removed
**Current mileage** 258,300km
Mileage in current ownership 126,985km
**Paid** £48,000

## PROS & CONS

**Costs last 12 months:**
**Total** £875
**Service interval:** 4 weeks, service 40,000km
**Major bills (over £100):** Power steering pump, complete clutch
**Average mpg:** 9.4mpg
**Other** Respray on acquisition, new stretch panels
**Breakdowns:** None

- ☺ The simplicity
- ☺ Reliability
- ☺ Easy access to engine
- ☺ Good back-up from Volvo and Plaxton
- ☹ Fuel consumption
- ☹ Poor heating system

**Current condition**

**Panels and bodywork**
★★★★★
Still in excellent condition

**Seats and flooring**
★★★★★
Virtually as new

**Driver area**
★★★★★
As new

**Engine and gearbox**
★★★★★

**Key**

☺ Positive points
☹ Negative points

★★★★★ Excellent
★★★★★ Very good
★★★★★ Good
★★★★★ Poor
★★★★★ Very poor

# Prime Premiere

## Plaxton has given sterling service and after a retrim will stay for two more years

**Owner's comments:** This vehicle fulfils our contracts and private hire daily. It's got a good appearance and the Volvo/Plaxton combination - which forms the whole of our coach fleet - repays us with the service we get from Volvo Truck and Bus at Stoney Stanton and from Plaxton. We pay £600 for a windscreen, for example. It's a good workhorse with a great track record.

This particular example is reaching the point where it needs retrimming and the boot relining where corrosion is starting to come through from the rear chassis members. This area is right behind the wheelarches and exposed to the elements.

All of this work will be carried out at Blackpool Trimshops, which we have used for a number of years. At the same time, ashtray louvres will be covered over - at present, those ashtrays still remaining in the vehicle have been glued shut as a temporary measure.

The moquette has worn very well, and the only poor areas are where frayed edges are showing along the edge of metalwork in the seats. Other interior wear includes missing sections of walnut-effect inlay beneath the windows, which has been picked off by vandals.

**What would you buy to replace it?:** It would have to be Volvo/Plaxton - a used B12B Paragon

**Driver comment:** B10M is a fantastic vehicle to drive. It's very smooth, very simple and offers good all-round visibility... there's nothing difficult about driving this vehicle. The seating is comfortable and the fact that it's not over-powerful ensures driving is in a relaxed style.

Bulkhead corrosion (above) will be addressed at retrim, but seats and driver area have worn well in its 10-year service life

# Deliveries

**Have you taken delivery of a new vehicle and want to tell the world about it? Email all the details and pictures to *cbwinbox@rouncymedia.co.uk* or write to the address on page 3**

## AMBASSADOR TRAVEL

Touring specialists Ambassador Travel, of Great Yarmouth, has just taken delivery of two Volvo B12Ms. The Sunsundegui-bodied coaches are both on long-term contract for Grand UK Holidays.

The new vehicles feature a Volvo D12C 420bhp engine coupled to Volvo's I-Shift gearbox - a first for Ambassador Travel. And the high specification interior - which boasts 49 reclining seats, climate control, toilet, TV/DVD player and hot and cold drinks facilities - ensures that passengers enjoy their tours of Britain and Ireland in complete comfort.

"We've got a number of Volvos in the fleet and the B12M Sunsundegui has worked well for us," explains Ambassador Travel deputy operations manager, Mike Pleasants: "It looks stylish, it's a great performer and we get the Volvo reliability which is vital for us with the volume of touring we're undertaking."

**FACT FILE**

**Chassis/body** Volvo B12M/ Sunsundegui
**Engine** Volvo D12C 420bhp
**Transmission** I-Shift
**Seats** 49
**Spec** Climate control, toilet, TV/DVD, drinks facilities
**Supplied by** Volvo Bus 01926 414518

## TIMBERBUSH TOURS

The first Mercedes-Benz Tourino north of the border has been delivered to Timberbush Tours of Edinburgh, set up eight years ago by Gary Voy.

"I went along to the Tourino launch which EvoBus held at Cumbernauld last autumn and was greatly impressed with what I saw. I particularly liked the standard and finish, and I wanted something that was a proper small coach," said Mr Voy.

The 34-seat Tourino joins a 10-strong all-Mercedes fleet engaged on Scottish tours and corporate charter work for a range of blue-chip clients. It joins the fleet at the same time as a new 16-seat Sprinter, and Timberbush has two more small Mercedes coaches on order.

Timberbush has an intensive tour programme, with vehicles operating every day except Christmas Day. This means that Mr Voy expects high standards of reliability, as his coaches cover high mileages in the two-and-a-half years in which he operates them before they are replaced.

The company's new Tourino, supplied by EvoBus UK, is 9.35m long and is powered by a rear-mounted 280bhp Mercedes OM906LA engine which drives through a six-speed manual gearbox. Other features include a Voith retarder and independent front suspension.

The Tourino enjoys the benefit of the EvoBus Europe-wide OmniPlus aftersales support which provides parts, service and repair facilities tailored to meet the needs of all operators of EvoBus products.

**FACT FILE**

**Chassis/body** Mercedes-Benz Tourino integral
**Engine** M-B OM906LA
**Transmission** Six-speed manual
**Seats** 34
**Spec** Air con, retarder
**Supplied by** EvoBus 0247 662 6000

## COASTAL COACHES

Coastal Coaches of Warton, Lancashire, sees its fleet rise to seven vehicles with the delivery of this Mercedes-Benz Tourino.

The company, which specialises in small group travel, operates an all-Mercedes fleet of vehicles in the 16-39 seat range.

"We chose the Tourino because we were looking for a high-quality midicoach for corporate charter work," explains Bill Holder, who set up Coastal Coaches with his wife Helen in 2000.

"All our vehicles are Mercedes, and all have performed excellently. That was another factor which prompted us to invest in a Tourino."

The 9.35m-long Tourino is a 34-seater with big-coach features, including air-conditioning and tinted double-glazing. It is powered by a rear-mounted 6.4-litre 280bhp Mercedes OM906LA engine and this drives through a six-speed manual gearbox. Other features of the mechanical specification include a Voith retarder and independent front suspension.

The quality of Mercedes-Benz aftersales support - described by Mr Holder as "excellent" - also influenced the decision to add a Tourino to the fleet.

The Tourino, like all EvoBus products, benefits from Europe-wide support through the company's OmniPlus network.

**FACT FILE**

**Chassis/body** Mercedes-Benz Tourino integral
**Engine** M-B OM906LA 280bhp
**Transmission** Six-speed manual
**Seats** 34
**Spec** Air con, retarder
**Supplied by** EvoBus 0247 662 6000

Bill Holder (right) takes delivery of his new Tourino

## NEALS TRAVEL

Cambridgeshire-based Neals Travel has just taken delivery of two Volvo B7Rs as replacements for two of its 19-strong fleet.

The family-run firm, established over 40 years ago, specialises in single and multi-day coach hire, school contracts and airport transfers, and the new coaches will be used for a mix of work.

Both new vehicles are Sunsundegui bodied with a Volvo D7C 7 litre engine, coupled to a ZF six-speed automatic gearbox. The interiors feature full climate control and their 57 seats are all fitted with three-point seatbelts.

The new coaches are the first new Volvos for several years for Neals. "We feel that the B7R Sunsundeguis stand out from the crowd while having all the benefits of Volvo engineering," explained director Bridget Paterson. "We felt the time was right to go for something different and we're confident that the new Volvos will fit the bill."

**FACT FILE**

**Chassis/body** Volvo B7R/ Sunsundegui
**Engine** Volvo D7C
**Transmission** ZF six speed automatic
**Seats** 57
**Spec** Climate control, three-point seat belts
**Supplied by** Volvo Bus 01926 414518

## ALBA TRAVEL

Alba Travel of Penrith, Cumbria, has recently upgraded its fleet with this new Mercedes-Benz 1018L Esker Cimo.

The vehicle specification includes 33 Ergos reclining seats plus courier seat, luggage racks with PSU's for each passenger, walnut effect dash kit, monitor & DVD player, PA system, 10-disc multi-play CD player, water pre-heater & double glazing.

This is the fourth vehicle Alba Travel have purchased from supplier Harry Ferguson Coach Sales Ltd.

The previous three vehicles are two Mercedes-Benz Sprinters and most recently an Esker Riada 616.

**FACT FILE**

**Chassis/body** Mercedes-Benz 1018L Esker Cimo
**Engine** Mercedes-Benz OM904LA 177bhp
**Transmission** 6 Speed Manual
**Seats** 33 + courier
**Spec** CD/DVD, double glazing
**Supplied by** Harry Ferguson Coach Sales 01501 762266

## DEREHAM COACHWAYS

Dereham Coachways of Dereham, Norfolk, has recently taken delivery of this 12m Volvo B12B Van Hool Alizee T9 Alicron.

The coach features alloy wheel, a demountable sunken washroom with continental door and 49/53 reclining seats with leather headrest inlay and piping.

Dereham's upcoming excursions include Leeds Castle, Stratford on Avon, and a Father's Day special to Rutland Water, as well as Blue Badge guided tours in London.

The firm, which has been established for more than 35 years, is also running trips to Lowestoft, the Last Night of the Proms and the Cromer Christmas Special.

**FACT FILE**

**Chassis/body** Volvo B12B Van Hool
**Engine** 420bhp
**Transmission** I-shift
**Seats** 49/53
**Spec** Monitors, air con, fridge, drinks facilities
**Supplied by** Moseley PCV 01977 609000

Phil Owen: Volvo Bus business development manager

# Owen to be key player for Volvo

Volvo Bus Limited has announced the appointment of **Phil Owen** to the role of business development manager, responsible for the development of Volvo's contractual and support services.

The emphasis of the role and Phil's department is to explore opportunities to minimise the operational costs of Volvo's customers through various tailor-made configurations of their contract maintenance and preventative maintenance packages, with one option being Volvo managing an operator's workshop on their behalf.

Mr Owen said: "We firmly believe that the future of the business lies in customer retention. Developing our soft products will give us the edge to retain customers for seven to 14 years. By which time their vehicles will need to be replaced and their experiences will make Volvo Bus their first choice.

"Volvo's proactive approach has meant that we have learnt a lot from the existing contracts, and from their analysis we know how much our products are costing to maintain. This information has been used not only to develop our soft product offerings but also to develop new and better vehicles and also to confirm that our servicing recommendations, for example standard oil change times, have been set correctly."

Phil joined Volvo Bus in 1995 from Griffin Mill, a Volvo dealer, where he started in 1987 as a technician, before being made service manager at the Swansea garage in 1990. His first position within Volvo was regional coach sales manager before the role was expanded in 1997 to regional commercial manager, incorporating bus and parts sales.

# Roadlink's new Darling

**Brian Darling has been appointed business development manager for PCV business by brake and suspension parts specialist Roadlink International.**

**Mr Darling will be responsible for developing sales of Roadlink components within the coach and bus industry. He has many years experience in the industry, having worked for companies including Lex Multipart, Grayson and Sachs Automotive.**

Brian Darling

# Bank appoints bus and coach rental manager

**Alliance & Leicester Commercial Finance has announced the appointment of Martyn Bellis as Bus & Coach Rental Manager.**

**In his new role, Martyn will report in to Rob Hallworth, head of the Bus & Coach division and will be based at the bank's offices at 298 Deansgate in Manchester. He will be responsible for developing Alliance & Leicester Commercial Finance's rental service for both new and existing customers throughout the UK.**

**Mr Hallworth said: "I am delighted that Martyn has chosen to join Alliance & Leicester Commercial Finance. The bank is well established in the bus and coach market, having provided around 20% of all UK bus and coach funding in 2005. Martyn brings many years experience of the bus and coach sector to the bank and I am sure that his expertise will be of a real benefit to our customers."**

**Commenting on his new role, Mr Bellis said: "Alliance & Leicester Commercial Finance has a fantastic reputation for providing good value, transparent products together with quick decision making and a high level of customer service. Bus and coach rental is a natural progression for the business and I am looking forward to developing this new service providing premium product and competitive rentals from a company established and trusted in the industry."**

Martyn Bellis

**Mr Bellis joins Alliance & Leicester Commercial Finance from AdClik Ltd, the holding company of busbiz.co.uk web based classified advertising and information resource for the bus and coach industry. Prior to this Martyn spent nine years in the bus and coach rental market, dealing with sales in the south of the UK.**

**For further information on Alliance & Leicester Commercial Finance's Bus and Coach finance, operators should call 0800 056 5105.**

# Five back at DRC

Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, John Hutton, has announced the reappointment of five commissioners to the Disability Rights Commission (DRC). **Saghir Alam**, **Susan Daniels OBE**, **Richard Exell OBE**, **Eve Rank**, and **Jenny White MBE** have been appointed to serve on the DRC for a further two-year term.

Saghir Alam works for a firm of solicitors practising business and medical law. Susan Daniels OBE is currently chief executive of the National Deaf Children's Society. Richard Exell OBE works for the Trades Union Congress, specialising in social security issues. He is a member of the Social Security Advisory Committee, a ministerial appointment.

Eve Rank has extensive experience in representing the needs and interests of people with learning disabilities and in establishing self-advocacy groups. Jenny White MBE was formerly legal advisor at the Electricity Association, and now works independently. She chaired the CBI Disability Working Group when the DDA was enacted, and served on the National Disability Council.

# Cox joins Hextalls

Hextalls, the City law firm, has hired **Julian Cox** as a partner in its Employment Law team. Cox joins from Wedlake Saint, where he was partner and head of Employment, advising clients in sectors such as financial IT, recruitment and transport.

Cox has eight years of broad-ranging employment law experience, both contentious and non-contentious, gained in private practice and in-house.

# US move

**Bryony Chamberlain**, managing director of Stagecoach Warwickshire, has been appointed operations director at Coach USA. She will be succeeded by **Phil Medlicott**, operations director at Stagecoach South.

Ms Chamberlain joined Stagecoach's graduate training scheme in 1996 and held a variety of positions within the company before becoming operations director at Stagecoach West Scotland. From there she moved to Warwickshire.

Prior to joining Stagecoach South, Mr Medlicott worked at Kentish Bus and Coach Company, Bakers Dolphin, Londonlinks and Stort Valley Coaches, among others.

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1996 B10M Jonckheere 49 Seat
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Cummins L10/ZF, Alexander R type bodies, either 74 seat dual door or 78 single door, large choice

**1994/7 N/R REG MCW METRORIDER ,**
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**1999 PP IVECO EURO MIDI**
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**1989 PP DENNIS CONDORS**
Gardner/Voith, Duple Metsec bodies, 2 door, 106 seaters

**1993 K REG DENNIS DART,**
Cummins/Allison, 40 seater, Wrights bodies

**1997 P REG VOLVO OLYMPIANS,**
Alexander bodies, 2 doors, 68 seats, or can be single doored and upseated to 78

**1995 M REG VOLVO OLYMPIAN,**
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**1989 G REG LEYLAND OLYMPIANS**
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**1988 LEYLAND TIGER**
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### X REG PEUGEOT BOXER

2.5 DIESEL, 5 SPEED, PAS, LONG WHEEL BASE, HIGH ROOF, SIDE LOADING DOOR WITH STEP, 12 SEMI HIGH BACK SEATS, UNWIN TRACKING, RICON TAIL LIFT, V GOOD CONDITION, ONE OWNER

### V REG MERCEDES SPRINTER 410D

TURBO DIESEL, PAS, LWB, HIGH ROOF, MELLOR CONVERSION, FRONT ENTRY SIDE DOOR WITH LOW STEP, 15 REMOVABLE HIGH BACK SEATS, UNWIN TRACKING, RATCLIFFE UNDERFLOOR TAIL LIFT, ONE OWNER,COIF

### 1999 T REG IVECO 49.10

TURBO DAILY, LONG WHEEL BASE, 5 SPEED , PAS, HIGH ROOF POWER DOOR FRONT ENTRY WITH STEP,16 HIGH BACK SEATS,UNWIN TRACKING, RATCLIFF UNDERFLOOR TAIL LIFT,ONE OWNER EX LOCAL AUTHORITY, 65,000 MILES,

### PP 1992 TOYOTA OPTIMO 2,

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### Y REG 2001 VOLKSWAGEN TRANSPORTER

2.5TDI AUTOMATIC, POWERED STEERING, MWB, SIDE LOADING DOOR, 5 SEATS PLUS 1 WHEELCHAIR, UNWIN TRACKING, WITH SIDE MOUNTED RICON TAIL LIFT,ONE OWNER, MINT CONDITION, 33,000 MILES

### X REG 2001 FORD TRANSIT 2.5 TD

MANUAL,CHASSIS DEVELOPMENT COACHBUILT BODY, PAS, 12 REMOVABLE HIGH BACK SEAT'S,UNWIN TRACKING, RICON TAIL LIFT, POWER DOOR FRONT ENTRY,ONE OWNER, EX LOCAL AUTHORITY, 63,000 MILES ONE REMAINING

### 2000 V REG PEUGEOT BOXER

2.5 DIESEL, 5 SPEED, PAS, L W B, EXCEL CONVERSION SIDE LOADING DOOR WITH STEP, 12 SEMI HIGH BACK SEATS , UNWIN TRACKING, RICON TAIL LIFT, V GOOD CONDITION, ONE OWNER

### 2001 51 REG RENAULT MASTER

MM33, 2.2 DCI ,5 SPEED ,PAS, MWB, O & H CONVERSION SIDE LOADING DOOR WITH AVS STEP, 7 SEATS PLUS 2 WHEELCHAIR SPACES, RICON TAIL LIFT, UNWIN TRACKING, MINT CONDITION ONE OWNER, LOW MILES,

### 2001 Y REG RENAULT MASTER

MM33, 2.2 DCI, 5 SPEED, PAS, MWB, O & H CONVERSION SIDE LOADING DOOR WITH AVS STEP, 7 SEATS PLUS 2 WHEELCHAIR SPACES, RICON TAIL LIFT, UNWIN TRACKING, MINT CONDITION ONE OWNER.

### T REG IVECO 59.12

2.8 DIESEL TURBO, MELLOR COACHBUILT BODY, P A S, 16 REMOVABLE SEMI HIGH BACK SEAT'S,UNWIN TRACKING, PLS FULLY AUTOMATIC TAIL LIFT, FRONT ENTRY,ONE OWNER, EX LOCAL AUTHORITY, LOW MILES 66,000 KMS

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### 52 REG 2003 RENAULT MASTER

LM35, 2.5, 5 SPEED, PAS, LONG WHEEL BASE, MELLOR CONVERSION SIDE LOADING DOOR WITH STEP, 16 HIGH BACK M2 TESTED SEATS PLUS DRIVER, MINT CONDITION, ONE OWNER, 6,000 MILES,

### 2003 03 REG RENAULT MASTER,

MM33, 2.2 DCI ,5 SPEED ,PAS, MWB, O & H CONVERSION SIDE LOADING DOOR WITH AVS STEP,11 SEATS OR 6 PLUS 2 WHEELCHAIR SPACES, RICON TAIL LIFT, UNWIN TRACKING, MINT CONDITION ONE OWNER, VERY LOW MILES,

### 04+54 REG RENAULT MASTER T35

2.5, 5 SPEED,PAS, LWB, MELLOR CONVERSION, SIDE LOADING DOOR WITH AVS STEP, 14 SEATS OR 10 PLUS 2 WHEEL CHAIRS, UNWIN TRACKING, RICON TAIL LIFT, MINT CONDITION, LOW MILEAGE.

### 02 REG, VOLKSWAGEN LT35

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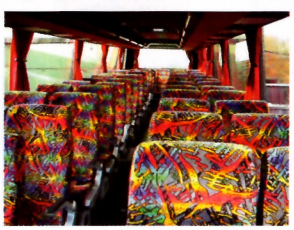

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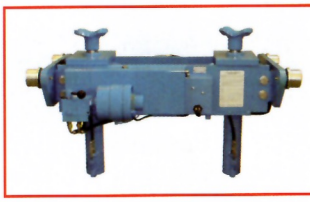

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# Aussie minister's bus lane gaffe

An Australian politician is in hot water after his car was caught on camera in a bus lane.

What's more embarrassing for Eric Roozendaal is that he is the New South Wales roads minister.

Roozendaal's ministerial car – in which he was being driven by a minder – was photographed by the Australian *Sunday Telegraph* whizzing past slow-moving peak-hour traffic at Bondi, in east Sydney.

Driving in a bus lane in Australia attracts a fine of $225 and the loss of three demerit points.

Mr Roozendaal said he was running late for an executive council meeting but he denied asking his driver to use the bus lane.

At a press conference, Roozendaal admitted it was an "embarrassing" incident for a roads minister.

"Unfortunately my vehicle was in a bus lane, I take full moral responsibility for that, people should be aware to stay out of bus lanes," Mr Roozendaal said.

"I was unaware at the time it was happening, I was reading some documents at the time ... I'll be paying any fine that is applicable and also making an equivalent donation to Father Chris Riley's Youth of the Streets program as an act of contrition."

Mr Roozendaal said he accepted that the community expected a high standard from their publicly elected representatives.

"There are no excuses for breaking the bus rules, but I guess we are only human," he said.

His driver would, however, have to take the loss of demerit points, Mr Roozendaal said.

Members of the opposition wasted no time in jumping on the minister's gaffe, labeling him 'arrogant' and 'out of his depth'.

The bus lane slip-up came just days after Roozendaal was caught giving the 'finger' to opposition MP Melinda Pavey in the NSW upper house.

The weary minister said: "It's been a tough week."

***CBW* reader Alan Smith found these photos on the web. If you've got a picture that you'd like to share with our readers, forward it to *cbwinbox@rouncymedia.co.uk***

## Googled...

**http://busforsaleguide.com/**

**"Bus for Sale Guide helps you find, choose and buy the right bus the first time" it says for openers. We're in the States looking at a strange variety of motors and discovering that when coaches get past 10 years old, enterprising Americans convert them into motorhomes. Yes, RVs (recreational vehicles) in the States are 12 metres long and frequently tow the family car. One of the reasons given for coach conversions? Fuel economy!**

## Dilbert

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# Two minute interview

**Full name** Jonathan Bray
**Age** 41
**Occupation** Assistant director PTEG Support Unit

**Will there be more passengers on coaches and buses in the future?** Free concessionary fares will boost bus use in the short term – but the danger is that the bus will become a social safety net/niche product unless we see a shift in national transport policy towards favouring public transport and raising the real cost of motoring. The best hope for that is growing concern over climate change and fuel security

**Which recent legislation has been most irritating or useless?** 2000 Transport Act. Combination of CPT lobbying and a compliant civil service make QCs very difficult to implement. Shame I wasn't around to take them on. I like a righteous scrap!

**Give the industry's business managers 20 words of helpful advice...** Get a job with one of the companies that prioritises quality over sending group HQ a big cheque every month

**When you got your first job in the industry, was it love at first sight?** First paid job was the Capital transport campaign – trying to prevent the then Conservative Government's London Transport from cutting services and taking conductors off. Campaigning gives you an insight into lots of different worlds – and you get to act on your principles, and change the world – even if only a little.

**Which vehicle – coach, bus, motorcycle or car – do you love the most, and why?** I am partial to an unrefurbished Routemaster (ie without the vile strip lighting and tacky refurb that LT inflicted on them)!

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